

## AMONG THIS WEEK'S CONTRIBUTORS

Gerald Abraham is the author of *The Concise Oxford History of Music*, 1979, the paperback edition of which was published last year.

Gilbert Adair's most recent books are *Alice Through the Needle's Eye*, 1984, and *Myths and Memories*, which was published earlier this year.

R. K. Angress is Professor of German at Princeton University. Her *The Early German Epigram: A study in poetry* was published in 1975.

Julian Baldick is a lecturer in the Study of Religions at King's College, London.

Jonathan Barnes is a Fellow of Balliol College, Oxford, and the editor of the Oxford Translation of Aristotle, 1984.

Victor Brombert is Professor of Romance and Comparative Literatures, and Director of the Gauss Seminars in Criticism, at Princeton University. His *Victor Hugo and the Visionary Novel* was published in 1984.

Robert Cecil was for thirty years in the Diplomatic Service and spent three war-time years in close contact with the Secret Service. He is a contributor to *British and American Approaches to Intelligence*, edited by K. G. Robertson, which will be published shortly.

Stephen R. L. Clark is Professor of Philosophy at the University of Liverpool. His books include *The Moral Status of Animals*, 1977, and *The Nature of the Beast*, 1982.

Patricia Craig's biography of Elizabeth Bowen will appear in Penguin's *Lives of Modern Women* series later this year.

Michael Edwards's most recent volume of poems, *The Magic, Unquiet Body*, was published last year.

D. J. Enright's *The Alluring Problem: An essay on irony* will be published later this year.

David Gascoyne's *Rencontres avec Benjamin Fondane* was published in 1985.

John Gould is Professor of Greek at the University of Bristol. His book on Herodotus will be published next year.

Julian Graffy is a lecturer in Russian at the School of Slavonic and East European Studies, London.

Antia Susan Grossman is the author of *Mark Twain*, 1982.

Jürgen Habermas is Professor of Philosophy at the University of Frankfurt. His books include *Knowledge and Human Interests*, 1972, *Communication and the Evolution of Society*, 1980, *Theorie des Kommunikativen Handelns*, 1981. His *Autonomy and Solidarity: Interviews* was published earlier this year. During the past few months he has been involved in a controversy with the leading historians of the Nazi era, Ernst Nolte and Klaus Hildebrand, over the issue of the uniqueness or otherwise of the Hitler period.

Ray Harris is Professor of General Linguistics at the University of Oxford and was awarded the Scott Moncrieff prize for his translation of Saussure's *Cours de Linguistique Générale*.

Christopher Hawtree's anthology of the magazine *Night and Day* was published last year.

Michael Hofmann's new collection of poems, *Acrimony*, will be published this autumn.

Douglas Johnson is Professor of French History at University College London. His books include *A Concise History of France*, 1970.

Tony Judt is the author of *Socialism in Provence, 1979*, and *Marxism and the French Left: Studies on labour and politics in France*, which was published earlier this year.

Sharon Karinsky is the author of *Russian Drama from its Beginnings to the Age of Pushkin*, 1985. His *Marina Tsvetayeva: The woman, her world and poetry* was published earlier this year.

Jonathan Keates's collection of stories, *Allegro Postillonus*, appeared in 1983.

Patrick McCarthy's books include *Camus: A critical study of his life and work*, 1982.

Derek Mahon's translation of the poems of Philippe Jaccottet will be published next year.

David Nokes's *Jonathan Swift: A hypocrite reversed* was recently awarded the James Tait Black Memorial Prize for the best biographical work published in 1985.

Richard Osborne's *Rossini in the Master Musicians series* is reviewed in this issue.

Anthony Pagden is the author of *The Fall of Natural Man: The American Indian and the origins of comparative ethnology*, 1982.

Nicholas Penny is Keeper of Western Art in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.

Alexander Platigarsky is the author of *The Buddhist Philosophy of Thought: Essays in interpretation*, 1984.

Theodore K. Rabb is Professor of Early Modern European History at Princeton University. He is one of the editors of a forthcoming edition of the autobiography of Leon Modena.

Stephen Romer's first collection of poems, *Idols*, was published last week.

John Russell is the author of *The Opera Industry in Italy from Cimarosa to Verdi: The role of the impresario*, 1984.

Lorna Sage is a lecturer in English and American Studies at the University of East Anglia.

Jaël Stephen's stories are included in *First Fiction: Faber Introduction 9*, which has recently been published.

Lord Trend was from 1963 to 1973 the Secretary of the Cabinet.

John Ure's travel books include *The Quest for Captain Morgan*, 1983. His *Trepassers on the Amazon* will be reviewed shortly in the TLS.

Bruce Welch is completing a study of Ancient Maya burial practices.

Stanley Wells is joint General Editor of the *Complete Oxford Shakespeare*, to be published this autumn.

T. P. Wiseman is Professor of Classics at the University of Exeter. His *Roman Studies, Literary and Historical* will be published later this year. He is the author of *Catullus and his World*, 1985.

## AUTHOR, AUTHOR

Competition No 296  
Readers are invited to identify the sources of the three quotations which follow and to send us the answers so that they reach this office not later than October 17. A prize of £20 is offered for the first correct set of answers opened on that date, or failing that the most nearly correct – in which case inspired guesswork will also be taken into consideration. Entries, marked "Author, Author 296" on the envelope, should be addressed to the Editor, *The Times Literary Supplement*, Priory House, St John's Lane, London EC1M 4BX. The solution and results will appear on October 24.

1 Sweet Suffolk owl, so trimly dight  
With feathers like a lady bright,  
Thou singst alone, sitting by night  
Te whit, te whoo, te whit, te whit

2 Yet at a brayd  
He hath well assayed  
To so-fa above E – la,  
Fa, la, la, fa, fa

3 Twit twit twit  
Jug jug jug jug jug jug

Competition No 292  
Winner: Oliver White  
Answers:

1 I've always liked cutthroat trout. They put up a

good fight, running against the bottom and the broad jumping. Under their throats they fly the orange banner of Jack the Ripper.

Richard Brautigan, *Trout Fishing in America*  
2 "Forgive me, every speckled trout"  
Says Semphill then,  
"And every swan and elder on these waters  
Certain strange men  
Taking advantage of my poverty  
Have wheedled all my loch-craft out."  
George Mackay Brown, "Trout Fishing".

3 Up Green Cove gap from Preacher Millap's cabin  
We walked a confident hour of victory,  
Sloped to the west on a trail that led us  
To Bald River where map and scene were one  
In seen-identity. Eight trout is the story  
In eight miles.  
Allen Tate, "The Trout May"

*The Thatcher Phenomenon* by Hugo Young and Anne Sloman, reviewed in the TLS of September 12, was incorrectly stated to be published by Penguin. It is actually a BBC Publications book.

*The James Joyce Broadsheet*, to which John Kidd referred in his review (September 5) of recent books on Joyce, is now published at the University of Leeds.

## FRANKFURT BOOK FAIR 2

## TLS

## The Times Literary Supplement

FRIDAY 3 OCTOBER 1986 No 4,357 80p

## Robert Knight: Waldheim in context – Austria and Nazism

## The self-made Kokoschka

## Peter Gay on two new Freud biographies

## Austrian publishing during the Anschluss

## Abraham Brumberg, Ernest Gellner, Roger Scruton: politics and writing in Poland and Czechoslovakia

## Franco – patience, cruelty and cunning

## Fiction: Thomas Bernhard, Jim Crace, Marguerite Duras, Peter Handke, Patrick Modiano

## Critics: Wilhelm Dilthey, Giovanni Macchia

## Poetry competition – the winners

## TLS Classified

Rates: Classified Display – £10.15 pcc, Classified Linage – £2.00 per line. Minimum 3 lines – @ £6.00. Box number – £2.00. Copy deadline: Classified display and Linage: Monday 10.00am in week of publication.

## Public &amp; University

## University of Birmingham

## FACULTY OF ARTS

## Chair of English Studies and Headship of the Department of English Language and Literature

Applications are invited for the Chair of English Studies and Headship of the Department of English Language and Literature, which will become vacant from 1 October 1987 on the retirement of Professor J. T. Boulton.

Salary in professional range, plus superannuation.

Further particulars available from the Vice-Chancellor, University of Birmingham, P.O. Box 363, Birmingham B15 2TT, to whom applications (15 copies: 1 from overseas applicants) should be submitted by 22 October 1986.

An Equal Opportunities Employer

## University of Hong Kong

Applications are invited for the following Chair in the Faculty of Arts:

## CHAIR OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE

In the Department of English Studies and Comparative Literature (Department of English Language and Literature). The Department is currently headed by Professor John Frow, who is also the Chair of English Language. The appointee must have strong academic qualifications in the field of English Language/Literature.

## CHAIR OF COMPARATIVE LITERATURE

also in the Department of English Studies and Comparative Literature. A special interest in East-West comparative literary studies would be advantageous but not essential.

Annual salary (superannuation) will be within the professional range and not less than HK\$392,400 (approx. £23,700) (including superannuation at June 30, 1986). At current rates, salaries tax will not exceed 17% of gross income. Housing at a rental of 14% of salary, children's education allowances, leave, and medical benefits are provided.

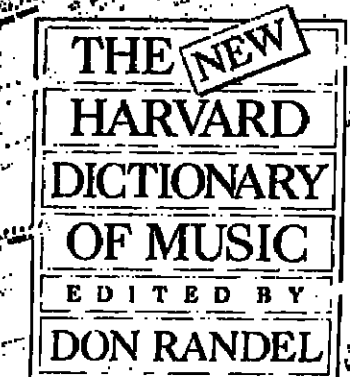
Further particulars and application form may be obtained from the General Association of Commonwealth Universities (GAUCU), 38 Gordon Square, London WC1H 0PF, or from the Appointments Unit, Secretary's Office, University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong Class 31 October 1986 (1987).

## Book Fairs

HAMPSTEAD Book Fair  
Secondhand & Antiquarian  
Booksellers' Fair  
25th Oct 11am-5pm, 26th Oct 11am-5pm, 27th Oct 11am-5pm, 28th Oct 11am-5pm, 29th Oct 11am-5pm, 30th Oct 11am-5pm, 31st Oct 11am-5pm, 1st Nov 11am-5pm, 2nd Nov 11am-5pm, 3rd Nov 11am-5pm, 4th Nov 11am-5pm, 5th Nov 11am-5pm, 6th Nov 11am-5pm, 7th Nov 11am-5pm, 8th Nov 11am-5pm, 9th Nov 11am-5pm, 10th Nov 11am-5pm, 11th Nov 11am-5pm, 12th Nov 11am-5pm, 13th Nov 11am-5pm, 14th Nov 11am-5pm, 15th Nov 11am-5pm, 16th Nov 11am-5pm, 17th Nov 11am-5pm, 18th Nov 11am-5pm, 19th Nov 11am-5pm, 20th Nov 11am-5pm, 21st Nov 11am-5pm, 22nd Nov 11am-5pm, 23rd Nov 11am-5pm, 24th Nov 11am-5pm, 25th Nov 11am-5pm, 26th Nov 11am-5pm, 27th Nov 11am-5pm, 28th Nov 11am-5pm, 29th Nov 11am-5pm, 30th Nov 11am-5pm, 1st Dec 11am-5pm, 2nd Dec 11am-5pm, 3rd Dec 11am-5pm, 4th Dec 11am-5pm, 5th Dec 11am-5pm, 6th Dec 11am-5pm, 7th Dec 11am-5pm, 8th Dec 11am-5pm, 9th Dec 11am-5pm, 10th Dec 11am-5pm, 11th Dec 11am-5pm, 12th Dec 11am-5pm, 13th Dec 11am-5pm, 14th Dec 11am-5pm, 15th Dec 11am-5pm, 16th Dec 11am-5pm, 17th Dec 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17th Jul 11am-5pm, 18th Jul 11am-5pm, 19th Jul 11am-5pm, 20th Jul 11am-5pm, 21st Jul 11am-5pm, 22nd Jul 11am-5pm, 23rd Jul 11am-5pm, 24th Jul 11am-5pm, 25th Jul 11am-5pm, 26th Jul 11am-5pm, 27th Jul 11am-5pm, 28th Jul 11am-5pm, 29th Jul 11am-5pm, 30th Jul 11am-5pm, 31st Jul 11am-5pm, 1st Aug 11am-5pm, 2nd Aug 11am-5pm, 3rd Aug 11am-5pm, 4th Aug 11am-5pm, 5th Aug 11am-5pm, 6th Aug 11am-5pm, 7th Aug 11am-5pm, 8th Aug 11am-5pm, 9th Aug 11am-5pm, 10th Aug 11am-5pm, 11th Aug 11am-5pm, 12th Aug 11am-5pm, 13th Aug 11am-5pm, 14th Aug 11am-5pm, 15th Aug 11am-5pm, 16th Aug 11am-5pm, 17th Aug 11am-5pm, 18th Aug 11am-5pm, 19th Aug 11am-5pm, 20th Aug 11am-5pm, 21st Aug 11am-5pm, 22nd Aug 11am-5pm, 23rd Aug 11am-5pm, 24th Aug 11am-5pm, 25th Aug 11am-5pm, 26th Aug 11am-5pm, 27th Aug 11am-5pm, 28th Aug 11am-5pm, 29th Aug 11am-5pm, 30th Aug 11am-5pm, 31st Aug 11am-5pm, 1st Sep 11am-5pm, 2nd Sep 11am-5pm, 3rd Sep 11am-5pm, 4th Sep 11am-5pm, 5th Sep 11am-5pm, 6th Sep 11am-5pm, 7th Sep 11am-5pm, 8th Sep 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24th Dec 11am-5pm, 25th Dec 11am-5pm, 26th Dec 11am-5pm, 27th Dec 11am-5pm, 28th Dec 11am-5pm, 29th Dec 11am-5pm, 30th Dec 11am-5pm, 31st Dec 11am-5pm, 1st Jan 11am-5pm, 2nd Jan 11am-5pm, 3rd Jan 11am-5pm, 4th Jan 11am-5pm, 5th Jan 11am-5pm, 6th Jan 11am-5pm, 7th Jan 11am-5pm, 8th Jan 11am-5pm, 9th Jan 11am-5pm, 10th Jan 11am-5pm, 11th Jan 11am-5pm, 12th Jan 11am-5pm, 13th Jan 11am-5pm, 14th Jan 11am-5pm, 15th Jan 11am-5pm, 16th Jan 11am-5pm, 17th Jan 11am-5pm, 18th Jan 11am-5pm, 19th Jan 11am-5pm, 20th Jan 11am-5pm, 21st Jan 11am-5pm, 22nd Jan 11am-5pm, 23rd Jan 11am-5pm, 24th Jan 11am-5pm, 25th Jan 11am-5pm, 26th Jan 11am-5pm, 27th Jan 11am-5pm, 28th Jan 11am-5pm, 29th Jan 11am-5pm, 30th Jan 11am-5pm, 31st Jan 11am-5pm, 1st Feb 11am-5pm, 2nd Feb 11am-5pm, 3rd Feb 11am-5pm, 4th Feb 11am-5pm, 5th Feb 11am-5pm, 6th Feb 11am-5pm, 7th Feb 11am-5pm, 8th Feb 11am-5pm, 9th Feb 11am-5pm, 10th Feb 11am-5pm, 11th Feb 11am-5pm, 12th Feb 11am-5pm, 13th Feb 11am-5pm, 14th Feb 11am-5pm, 15th Feb 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# The Waldheim context: Austria and Nazism

Robert Knight

Long ago, when Kurt Waldheim was still in *Lederhosen*, there was an Austrian Problem. Put simply, it was how to create a stable, prosperous, self-confident Austrian nation-state after the disintegration of the Habsburg Empire in the First World War. The first Austrian Republic failed to provide the solution. From its establishment in 1918 it lived in the shadow of self-doubt and economic failure. It was a collection of territories whose main common link other than the German language was a ruling dynasty which no longer ruled. The country's very name, "Deutsch-Österreich", was a declaration of no-confidence in a future outside Greater Germany. It was cleft ideologically and socially between the Christian Socialists and the Social Democrats, and between Red Vienna and the black provinces. Separated from its former markets in the East and unable to compete with the advanced economies of Western Europe, it was in no position to survive the bleak economic climate of the interwar world. Its parliamentary tradition was weak, and in the 1930s succumbed to "clerico-fascist" authoritarianism and repression. The régime's attempts to develop a sense of Austrian patriotism to resist the steady encroachment of the Third Reich were a dismal failure. In the Foreign Office, Alexander Cadogan noted in February 1938: "Personally, I almost wish Germany would swallow Austria, and get it over. She is probably going to do so anyhow – anyhow we can't stop her." With the *Anschluss* of March 1938, she did. Today, Austria's national identity is virtually unquestioned. It has an advanced industrialized economy with record growth, while maintaining relatively low levels of inflation and unemployment. Its social and political divisions have been softened by an all-embracing national consensus. Not everyone may agree that Austria has become an "island of the blessed", as some Austrians maintain, but few could deny that the Austrian Problem has largely been solved.

In part, of course, this is due to the changed post-war international context. In 1955, Austria's State Treaty was signed and ten years of four-power occupation came to an end. Austria then set up business as a forum for negotiation, and starting with Khrushchev and Kennedy in 1961, *détente*. The freezing of the lines of division in Central Europe has allowed it to

create a niche from which to pursue a policy of "permanent neutrality". One result of the division of Germany is that (West) German economic penetration of Austria – an important ingredient of her economic stability – is regarded as politically innocuous by the rest of the world. But the domestic social and political components of Austrian success are perhaps even more important. They have turned the strife-torn ugly duckling of the First Republic into the consensual swan of the Second.

In all this, the "Waldheim affair" should not be seen as a paradoxical blot on Austria's success story but as part and parcel of it. Not only was Austria's national consensus too weak after the Second World War to allow a genuine confrontation with her recent past, it could only be successfully consolidated by avoiding one. In other words, Austrian serenity today about Kurt Waldheim's wartime activity in the Balkans, Austrian indifference to his patent dishonesty about his past and Austrian toleration of antisemitism are integral aspects of the solution to the Austrian Problem. Waldheim's protest that he had only "done his duty" by fighting with the *Wehrmacht* in the Balkans had a more authentic ring than many he has made. It struck a chord with many Austrians of the older generation. The trouble is that the myth of Austria's foundation is radically at odds with this interpretation. This myth relates that Austrian nationhood and Austrian democracy were born (or reborn) of the wartime suffering of Austrian victims of Nazism and heroes of the Austrian resistance movement. After a short-lived euphoria following the *Anschluss*, it is claimed, disillusionment set in; Prussian carpet-baggers and Gestapo thugs descended on Austria, and the Austrians turned away from both the German idea and National Socialism; eventually, Austria's national consciousness and her democratic commitment re-emerged, united, from under the Nazi jackboot.

The main weakness of this version of events is that it understates the degree to which Austrians' allegiance to the Third Reich was maintained even after the war had begun. Though the almost hysterical enthusiasm with which Hitler was greeted after the *Anschluss* did indeed swiftly disappear, there were many economic reasons for Austrians to continue to support the Nazi régime. German investment stimulated spectacular economic growth. The *Anschluss* "de-provincialized" and modernized Austria's western provinces, partly at the expense of Vienna. But Vienna, too, enjoyed an end to mass unemployment, an in-

crease in promotion horizons, and a lucrative windfall of "aryanized" Jewish businesses, houses and valuables. However much the Nazis came to be disliked as the war progressed, there is not much evidence to suggest that this dislike was any different from that shown by the Germans. In many areas of Austria which did not experience severe bombing or front-line fighting, anti-Nazi sentiments may even have been less strong. Food supplies do not seem to have diminished dramatically until the closing stages of the war or until after it was over. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that for many Austrians the end of the war was not seen as liberation from an alien yoke.

There was, it is true, Austrian resistance. But its role has been much inflated. Despite the courage and heroism of those involved, whether Communists, Socialists, Catholics or Monarchists, it hardly amounted to a "movement". Though most Austrians had reason to complain about the régime – and increasingly did so – they had no particular reason to head for the mountains. The average Austrian did not live in the state of terror and persecution which left so many Poles, Italians or Yugoslavs with little alternative but to become heroes. Austrian nationalism was not strong enough to mobilize significant anti-Nazi forces. Nearly all Allied efforts to establish underground networks in Austria ended in betrayal or failure. Many resistance fighters did not take up arms until the spring of 1945. (Some waited until the war was over.)

After the war, the Austrian government took great pains to present a different picture. The Allies had given them good reason for doing so in October 1943. The Foreign Ministers of Britain, the United States, and the Soviet Union had declared their intention of restoring the Austrian state, describing Austria as the first victim of Nazi aggression. At the same time they warned that "she has a responsibility which she cannot evade for participation in the war on the side of Hitlerite Germany, and that in the final settlement account will inevitably be taken of her own contribution to her liberation". Post-war Austrian governments naturally argued that Germany was the fount of all evil and that the Austrians had been, as one British diplomat put it, "the proto-martyrs of Europe". The case was advanced with skill and persistence and, as the Cold War developed, first the Americans and then the British and French came to accept it. The Russians took longer to come round but in the end they too shifted. As

a result, the 1955 settlement was termed a "State Treaty" – Austria was not considered to have been a belligerent – and the day before it was signed, the Four Allies agreed to delete a reference to Austria's "responsibility" for participation in the war.

But the official mythology of Austria as victim-cum-resister did not contain enough truth to make a post-war "denazification" policy unnecessary. Perhaps more importantly, it was not widely enough believed to provide the basis for Austria's post-war consensus.

The Second Austrian Republic was proclaimed on April 28, 1945, by a provisional government established as a *fait accompli* by the Red Army after its entry into Vienna. It was the fourth régime (on some counts the fifth) that the Austrians had experienced in the space of thirty years. The street signs had to be changed again; and yet another national anthem learnt. On the face of it, the new republic did not look much more convincing than its predecessor twenty-five years earlier. It was hampered, of course, by a multitude of acute problems and by four-power occupation and the zonal divisions. But even without all that, its future would have been gloomy. The difficulties of exporting to the former Habsburg "successor" states increased as the eastern European countries set out on programmes of forced industrialization. Food and raw material supplies from the East fell drastically. The first Chancellor, Karl Renner, compared the occupying powers to "four elephants in a rowing-boat" but actually without the American elephant haling it out, the boat would have sunk.

Renner's government was based on equal participation by the Socialists, the People's Party and the Communists. But, despite Western alarm, Communist strength was illusory and in the first elections, seven months after the provisional government was established, the Communists were decimated. The real basis for Austria's post-war political settlement was the ensuing "historic compromise" between the Socialists and the People's Party. It was a compromise which demanded a generous exercise of selective amnesia by both sides. The People's Party (the former Christian Socialists) were compromised by their support of the pre-war "clerico-fascist" dictatorship. They could only cover their embarrassment by invoking the pre-war dictators, Dollfus and Schuschnigg, as anti-Nazi patriots and by discarding their clericalism. The socialist leadership, too, had its skeletons. Austro-Marxism

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had argued that socialism could only be achieved in a relatively backward Austria by way of revolution in Greater Germany. As a result, many socialists had found it hard to reject the *Anschluss*, even though it came in a Nazi uniform. (Indeed Renner had welcomed it with an enthusiastic and public declaration of "Ich stimme mit Ja".) The post-war move to more modest reformist goals limited to Austria alone, and the entry into a coalition government with the People's Party, may have made sense politically. But they made the gap between the fighting rhetoric and pragmatic reality quite obvious. Furthermore, Austria's working class – especially the younger generation – had in part been attracted by the prosperity and apparent egalitarianism which the Third Reich had offered. At all events it seems likely that the pre-war dictators were more hated by the working classes than the Third Reich. Memories of February 1934, when Vienna workers had been gunned down by Dollfuss's soldiers, were more traumatic than those of March 1938.

These contradictions and weaknesses were overcome on the level of the party leadership by a solidarity created by the experience of Nazi rule and the conviction of the overriding need to hang together in the face of the occupying powers and, in particular, of the Russians. But this solidarity did not extend to the whole population. The old social and ideological divisions remained strong.

So in its early years the Austrian government was insecure and beleaguered. The occupation, the Russians and the Communist Party caused difficulties. Food shortages were another constant source of criticism; in 1946 the calorie ration dropped to 1,200 a day for a "normal consumer". The old provincial resentment against Vienna re-emerged. The domination of the Socialists and the People's Party in the distribution of patronage was increasingly criticized as corrupt and undemocratic (it often was). The development of Austria's "neo-corporatist" structures, involving employers and trade unions, in regulating wages, prices and welfare, also started shakily. Price controls were evaded by resort to the black market. In 1949, the centrally negotiated Price and Wage Agreement caused widespread unrest, which in 1950 (with a little help from the Communist Party) nearly brought the government down. The half-hearted, grumbling acceptance of Austria's Grand Coalition and her burgeoning "neo-corporatist" structures, form the background to Austria's handling of the "Nazi question".

By 1945 the Nazis were firmly embedded in Austrian society. With their families, party members amounted to about 20 per cent of the population. But the problem was more complex than this. Many party members had joined out of opportunism, not idealism. Others had supported the régime with more or less enthusiasm, without ever becoming party members.

Any attempt to cut through this complexity required the active participation of at least some Austrians. The Western Allies made the mistake of trying to do it themselves. In the first few months of the occupation they proceeded with denazification on the basis of prepared lists, dismissing, arresting and internment Nazis who complied with certain formal criteria, such as rank in party or state organization. In all, about 20,000 people were interned and many more dismissed from their jobs. But purely from the point of view of security – once the danger of an underground Nazi "werewolf" movement disappeared – this was probably too many. On the other hand, the Western Allies' exclusion of the Austrians from decision-taking meant that major Nazis were often missed. From a very early stage complaints mounted that the "real" Nazis were being allowed to run free or even being given jobs by the military government. By early 1946 the run-down in Allied manpower resulted in the release of many of those who had been interned as suspected Nazis. The experience of internment had tended to create solidarity between small and big Nazis, and to provide both with a sense of grievance against the Allies. Its educative effect was certainly minimal.

Left largely to their own devices the Austrian government soon came up against the inherent fragility of its position. Although it had been given a relatively free hand by the Russians, the results were not much more im-

pressive. There was in fact a consensus about the need for Allies and Austrians to present a united front but no consensus as to what constituted a serious Nazi. The first Austrian denazification law of May 1945 attempted to overcome the problem by applying the lowest common factor of Austrian nationalism. It selected the banned Nazis (about 100,000), who had illegally undermined the First Austrian Republic, for special treatment but the formula was not workable. Many of the "illegals" had become disillusioned after the *Anschluss* and were relatively harmless. Anyway, many socialists had also offended against Schuschnigg and had shared prison cells with the "illegals". By the autumn of 1945, appeals for ex-



A detail from Oskar Kokoschka's oil painting, "Anschluss - Alice in Wonderland", 1942. It is reproduced from Oskar Kokoschka 1886-1980, edited by Richard Calvocoressi, which is reviewed on page 1086.

emption had reached huge proportions and the law had ground to a halt under a mountain of files. The adoption of the rule of law (*Rechtsstaat*) seemed to lead inexorably to the rule of the bureaucracy.

Under Allied pressure early in 1946, the alternative of a politically initiated purge was tried. But it did not extend beyond the higher echelons of the Austrian administration (Waldheim was one of those scrutinized) and the momentum of denazification declined rapidly. Especially in the legal and educational system, where Nazi membership had been almost obligatory, the administrative objections to blanket dismissals appeared overwhelming. Nazi judges and lawyers were sometimes employed to administer denazification. Yet a denazification which attempted to go beyond judicial or political procedures by undermining the economic and social bases of Nazism would have torn the new Austria apart. It would have threatened the People's Party and undermined the very basis of the coalition. It would also have been unacceptable to right-wing social democrats like Renner who wished to see an end to "mutual persecution" and peace and quiet restored. The strict and internment of Nazis ordered by the Communist-led State Police in 1945 were opposed by both socialists and conservatives in the government, and the operation was soon put into reverse.

In the absence of agreed criteria, the re-integration of the Nazis took place by means of *ad hoc* bargains struck between the officials of the two main parties. A Nazi who wished to regain (or retain) his job applied for the protection of one of the two parties. If he was important or able enough the party would be likely to support him. The law offered enough loopholes through which he could jump. By this process public debate was avoided, and opportunism, and sometimes corruption, were encouraged.

By the time a second law was passed, in February 1947, denazification – along with re-education – had become a dirty word. On paper – owing to Allied intervention – the law was a draconian measure. It distinguished, on the basis of a number of membership criteria, between "more incriminated" and "less incriminated" Nazis – there were about 42,000 of the first and half a million of the second. The legislation established a series of graded penalties ranging from loss of employment and housing to penal taxation and internment. Church lead-

dom Party, last month turned their backs on the party leadership and the three-year coalition with the Socialists.)

The price of isolating the right-wing core and integrating the majority of former Nazis was that a range of right-wing ideas gained political respectability. Denazification penalties were steadily dismantled. Property – in some cases "aryanized" – which had been confiscated from Nazis after 1945 was restored. Fines were repaid to Nazis and their pension rights were restored. A weakly based anti-Nazi Austrian nationalist mythology was overtaken by a more potent anti-Communism. Helped by the lawlessness of the Red Army in 1945 and Soviet refusal (after 1949) to agree to a State Treaty, the picture of Austria as a bastion of the West and Western values gained ground. It allowed former Nazis to construct a national historical continuity which started from the defence of Vienna against the Turks and continued via Stalingrad to the State Treaty. From this perspective, denazification itself was a betrayal of Western values. Internment camps were frequently described as concentration camps; discrimination against Nazis was equated with Nazi persecution of the Jews, the Nuremberg decrees were offset by the Nuremberg trials.

By the mid-1950s the results of this process were beginning to emerge. A flourishing extreme-right subculture developed (especially in the universities); SS veteran organizations paraded and openly glorified their war; a number of court cases showed that Austrian judges and juries took a remarkably lenient attitude to the murder of civilians. In one case in 1965, a SS war criminal, already condemned of war crimes in Belgium, was freed by an Austrian jury. Antisemitism too was given a kind of semi-respectability. Compared to the vindictive and rapacious antisemitism which accompanied the *Anschluss* and led to the death of 60,000 Austrian Jews and the expulsion of a further 120,000, it may appear fairly innocuous. Even after the attempts by journalists and politicians to mobilize it in the recent election campaign it is hardly a major political force. Nevertheless it has been "reprivatized" (to use Bernd Martin's phrase), not eliminated, and remains stronger in Austria than in any other Western country.

Here too, aware of the shakiness of their own position, most of Austria's post-war leaders tended to take the line of least resistance. Although some had their own antisemitic views, their main reasons were nakedly pragmatic. Austrian officials recruited Austrian Jews posthumously into Austria's resistance movement while at the same time refusing to accord any "special treatment" to those who had survived. The policy was put in 1947 by the Austrian Foreign Minister, Karl Gruber, who opposed the inclusion of compensation provisions for Jews in the Austrian State Treaty. Measures of this sort might, he said, bring a danger of arousing afresh the embers of antisemitism in Austria, whilst it would also appear unfair that those Austrians who had escaped should receive better terms than those who had remained and been placed in concentration camps.

Austrian governments were consistently readier to compensate Nazis for losses incurred as a result of denazification than to provide compensation for their Jewish victims.

This is a moral blot on Austria's record, and is the price the country has paid for its undoubted economic and political success. By the mid-1950s, even before the State Treaty was signed, Austria was on the brink of unprecedented prosperity. The Austrian "miracle" was well under way.

In their classic work on the subject, *Die Unfähigkeit zu Trauern* (1967), Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich describe the strategies adopted in post-Nazi Germany in order to avoid facing the enormity of the Nazi era and the consequent psychological loss, on an individual and group level. But does such self-deception and suppression of the truth affect the viability of a political system? On the whole, Austria's post-war history seems to suggest that it does not. And to support Bruno Kreisky's dismissive view of "Vergangenheitsbewältigung" (coming to terms with the past) as "ein Gerede" (empty words). If you run your shop efficiently and let sleeping Nazis lie, business may well prosper. It is a depressing conclusion.

## Personal sources of a theory

Peter Gay

WILLIAM J. McGRATH  
*Freud's Discovery of Psychoanalysis: The politics of hysteria*  
366pp. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press. \$27.50.

08014 17708  
DIDER ANZIEU  
*Freud's Self-Analysis*  
Translated by Peter Graham  
618pp. Chatto and Windus. £25.  
07012 0446X

To read Didier Anzieu's and William McGrath's informed scholarly studies of Freud's early career is to regain solid ground after wading in the morass of much recent writing on Freud, angry, sometimes malicious, and often slipshod. The two books cover very similar ground, but complement one another and can be read in tandem: Anzieu moves with fair despatch from Freud's birth in 1856 to his centrepiece, Freud's dream of "Irma's injection", that classic dream of psychoanalysis, which Freud dreamt and analysed in mid-July, 1885. He returns to Freud's early days, as he looks back at them from the perspective of dreams that Freud dreamt in the late 1890s, in pursuit of his self-analysis. McGrath for his part meticulously works his way through Freud's adolescence and university years. Both authors make exhaustive, often imaginative use of Freud's dreams, but while Anzieu concentrates on Freud's inner life to explore the ramifications of Freud's self-analysis, McGrath, though by no means slighting the information that Freud's dreams yield for the schooled reader, devotes gratifying amounts of space to Freud's experience from his infancy in the little Moravian town of Freiberg to his student days in Vienna. He makes lavish and impressive use of Freud's letters to his school friend Eduard Silberstein, to which Ronald Clark also had access for his bulky life of Freud, but from which he draws rather more usable material than Clark had been able to do. He is at his best mapping the twists and turns of Freud's mind during the years that he was finding his way in the world and settling on his career. Others have suggested that Freud's philosophy professor at the University of Vienna, Franz Brentano, ex-priest and brilliant dialectician who believed in God and respected Darwin at the same time, had considerable influence on him. But they have never charted that influence; in his pages on Brentano, to my mind the best in his book, McGrath makes an incontrovertible case for it. It proved to be temporary but unsettling while it lasted, and sheds interesting light on Freud's intellectual development.

The Freud who emerges in McGrath's book is more complex, and hence more human, than he often seems to be in the schematic treatments, whether adoring or derisive, that writers on Freud have so often deemed adequate. Here is the boy poring over the *Philosophy Bible*, that product of liberal Jewish scholarship, with its informative commentary and its vivid illustrations inflaming his imagination and haunting his dreams; here is the principled young atheist swayed for a time by Brentano's seductive theism; here is the self-confident and brilliant student made aware of antisemitism yet committed to Germanic Austrian nationalism; here is the hysteric studying hysterics. Very little has escaped McGrath, and the sophistication of his interpretations gives *Freud's Discovery of Psychoanalysis* an edge over the first volume of Ernest Jones's classic biography, now more than thirty years old. That biography, flawed as it obviously is, has been unjustly denigrated and deserves a better press than it has received, but there is little doubt that McGrath (who can, of course, draw on Jones as one of his sources of information) is subtler than the master. He is right to complain that Jones "consistently underestimates the importance of philosophy to Freud's intellectual development", particularly in the case of Franz Brentano. Jones left much to be said, and much to be corrected, and McGrath manages to say and correct some of both.

Much the same holds true of Anzieu's widely used and expensive commentary on Freud's self-analysis. It has been a stand-by in Freud studies ever since its first appearance in 1959, and even

more, in its considerably revised two-volume version of 1975. *Freud's Self-Analysis*, now published after long delays and well served by Peter Graham's fluent translation, essentially reproduces the later, larger edition, only shorn of some appendices. It is a good book to have available, with its informative analyses of the dreams that Freud recorded, in his own popularization. "On Dreams", in other papers and even in his correspondence as well as in *The Interpretation of Dreams*. These dreams, with their rich allusions to Freud's pressing emotional needs and professional concerns from his childhood onward right through to his discovery of the "shibboleths" of psychoanalysis – the rules governing dreams, the Oedipus complex, the primal scene, castration anxiety and the rest – permit Anzieu to trace those essential ideas to their deep origins in Freud's mind. What we get in Anzieu is virtually a biography of Freud, the first psychoanalyst, up until his forties, when the outlines of his system stood clearly before him.

Here are two valuable books, then, throwing necessary, reasonably focused and never glaring light on the making of a powerful theory. But they are not without their flaws. While most of Anzieu's assertions are adequately grounded and his speculations persuasive, he is at times given to hasty conclusions without, or even against, the evidence. He calls Freud's mother "a vivacious, cheerful and gentle" woman when whatever testimony we have makes her appear imperious, demanding, dictatorial. True, her first-born remained her golden boy all her life, but at no little cost to him. Hence Anzieu, probably following Ernest Jones, is in my judgment wrong to argue that Freud's mother's "proud, loving passion" gave him "a strong sense of security and faith in life". Anzieu does not fail to comment on the sufferings that the birth of siblings imposed on little Sigmund Freud, but he fails to recognize the depth and persistence of those sufferings. It is far more plausible – certainly this is the thesis I stand ready to defend – that it was Freud's *insecurity* that made so obsessed, so driven a researcher out of him. Amalie Freud's cherished first-born, he was repeatedly dispossessed by the arrival of his siblings. And his "tormented" way of working, which needs more attention than it has had, most likely arose from a profound need to re-establish his primacy with his mother and, perhaps, to atone for his confessed death-wishes against his little brother. I am just as sceptical about Anzieu's assertion that "Vienna was an ideal medium for his conquering identifications". Any large European city with a first-rate university and a sizable enough public ready to enter analysis, both to supply stimulation and patients, would have served Freud just as well.

Anzieu also permits himself some distracting slips. It is misleading to write that Freud "discovered" a culture "wrongly in fact, for it was a kite) in a childhood memory and a painting by Leonardo da Vinci". The mistake about the culture arose from Freud's trusting a mistranslation of the Italian text, but there was a bird in a retrospective fantasy of Leonardo's. Nor does Freud deserve the dubious merit of tracing the outlines of a bird in Leonardo's "Anna Metterza"; the imaginative discoverer was Freud's friend, the Zürich pastor Oskar Pfister. That is a caviar; what matters more is that Anzieu tells us without adding qualifications that Freud "in extracurricular lessons was

*The Conscience of Words*, a collection of essays by Elias Canetti (translated by Joachim Neugroschel, 166pp. Deutsch. £8.95. 0 233 97900 X), was first published in German, in 1976 and reviewed in the TLS of November 5 of that year. With one exception all the essays were written between 1962 and 1974. The subjects were wide-ranging in time – from Confucius to Hiroshima – and embrace figures as far apart in character and import as Tolstoy, Karl Kraus, Georg Büchner and Hitler's architect, Speer (in an essay now inexplicably divided into two). But this is no omnium gatherum – the volume is in fact fascinating because Canetti's two life-long concerns hold it undemonstratively together. Key themes recur in unexpected variations: the importance of historical models as indices of our own modernity (Confucius) or our madness (Muhammad Tughlak, the extravagantly destructive Sultan of Delhi); the status and the inalienable claims of literature; the

taught Hebrew by Samuel Hammerschlag", the paternal friend of his school years and beyond. McGrath, who makes the same statement almost word for word, at least has an inkling how little those Hebrew lessons meant. Hammerschlag taught his Jewish charges far more about Jewish ethics and Jewish history than Hebrew grammar or vocabulary. This is not a trivial matter: after all, late in life, Freud would reiterate that he could not read Hebrew, a disclaimer that some commentators have found hard to reconcile with Freud's evident gift for languages. Was forgetting his Hebrew a way of denying his Jewishness? The record shows that such a question is wholly unjustified; the fact is that Freud had very little Hebrew to forget.

The flaw compromising McGrath's presentation is more consequential. The whole of *Freud's Discovery of Psychoanalysis* amounts to less than its parts. McGrath is ridden by a thesis: the thesis that Freud's psychoanalysis was in crucial ways a response to his political passions and the increasingly unpromising political situation in Vienna. McGrath's mentor Carl Schorske has seen psychoanalysis as a counterpolitics, the resort of a frustrated political animal to a profession that would yield satisfaction and perhaps fame and influence. McGrath sets out to demonstrate this contention in learned detail.

When Freud's political dreams are carefully dated and chronologically aligned with these political events (the decline and eventual fall of Austrian liberalism to the *völkisch*, antisemitic movement led by Karl Lueger) and the key intellectual steps which led to his discovery of psychoanalysis, a historically persuasive pattern emerges to suggest that politics did play a significant role in his creative process.

Thus, the political events he lived through stirred his own fantasies so powerfully and directly that Freud suddenly came to realize that fantasy could foster driving emotional forces as powerful as, or even more powerful than those generated by real events. When he came to this realization, late in the summer of 1897, it removed a barrier to his further psychological and intellectual development.

Hence, in writing *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud found an outlet for his political passions which served him well both emotionally and intellectually.

It is beyond dispute that as a rebellious young man and, as he matured, a Jew living in an increasingly antisemitic society, Freud had an interest in politics. He made disrespectful observations about the imperial house; dreamt a much-exploited dream, the "Count Thun" dream, that hints at revolutionary sentiments bubbling up within him; he smoked a celebratory cigar in the mid-1890s, when Emperor Franz Josef refused to confirm the demagogue Lueger as mayor of Vienna; he called himself, in a late letter to Arnold Zweig, a liberal of the old school. All these facts are, or should be, staples of Freud biography. But they do not connect his political views to his scientific work.

Certainly a historian or biographer should not take his subject's statements, or silences, as gospel truth. No one, not even Freud, is his own best judge. But Freud's accounts of how he came to psychoanalysis are copious and convincing, and they have nothing to say about politics at all. Freud became aware of antisemitism during his early years at the university, but he had decided to switch from law to medicine

power of words both to destroy and to rescue. Canetti's own insecurities are a vivid thread – he once felt threatened by Karl Kraus's unstoppable barrage of judgments; he always needs the secure, calming privacy of a diary; he resists death. Even his faith in words has an overtone of personal urgency. Canetti has many tones of voice – inelegant flatness, heard on occasion in this translation, is not one of them.

Canetti's *Earliness: Fifty characters*, translated by Neugroschel, first published in German in 1974, is also issued in a new edition (101pp. Deutsch. £7.95. 0 233 97861 5). It is a collection of portraits of types, some only 400 words long: "The Blind Man", "The Syllable-Pure Woman", "The Moon Cousin", etc. The original TLS reviewer (January 10, 1975) commented that "each could be the sketch for a novel".

Philip Brady

at least a year earlier. And while this decision was doubtless a more complex affair than Freud recognized, there is not a trace of evidence that he made it because he felt frustrated in his ambition to become prime minister of Austria-Hungary. Again, what caused Freud to abandon the so-called seduction theory of neuroses was not because Lueger finally forced his way into the mayoralty of Vienna and persuaded Freud of the power of fantasies. It was, rather, precisely what he told his intimate Fliess in the famous letter of September 21, 1897: he no longer found his theory convincing, for a number of reasons that he spelled out with care.

It may sound impressive, to be sure, to maintain that Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams* "became a vehicle for achieving, in the realm of personal psychology, the ideal of freedom that had inspired the political hopes of his youth", but there is nothing in Freud's masterpiece to substantiate such a claim. The freedom that psychoanalysis at its best may provide is inner psychological room for manoeuvre. In a famous sentence, Freud summed up the aim of psychoanalytic therapy, "where id was, there ego shall be". The freedom he hoped to achieve for analysands was freedom of choice – of a lover, of a career, not of political opinions or candidates. McGrath can speak of "the strong interest in politics that Freud developed during his adolescence", only by playing semantic games, describing as political such unpolitical experiences as confrontations with the family. Freud was a radical, as McGrath insists; he changed the way we see the world and ourselves. But, as his political attitudes towards civil disorder in Austria or towards Communism amply demonstrate, his explicit radicalism was confined to protests against the narrow, neurosis-creating sexual ideals of his bourgeois society. McGrath's commitment to his thesis, then, is a pity, for the details of his interpretations, as long as he stays away from politics, are impressively intelligent and refreshingly suggestive.

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# Cracks in the self-made image

Norbert Lynton

**OSKAR KOKOSCHKA**  
Briefe  
Edited by Olda Kokoschka and Heinz Spielmann  
Volume One: 1905–1919  
398pp. 3 456 455800  
Volume Two: 1919–1934  
347pp. 3 456 455827  
Düsseldorf: Classen.  
**FRANK WHITFORD**  
Oskar Kokoschka: A life  
221pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson. £15.  
0297 787187  
**RICHARD CALVOCCRESSI** (Editor)  
Oskar Kokoschka 1886–1980  
367pp. Tate Gallery. £25.  
0946590427

Kokoschka pictured himself constantly, not only in his self-portraits. The second exhibit in the Tate Gallery's centenary exhibition this summer was "St Veronica", probably done in 1909 when he was twenty-three; it is his own face that we see on the sudarium. In 1910 he was the risen Christ pointing to the wound in his side on a poster for Berlin; the same again in 1912, for a Viennese occasion. The portrait series of intellectuals that he produced in those years are similar to each other in a way which reveals them as self-portraits by proxy. Throughout his long and productive life, we find his features in many a subject picture, painting or print. All of his work signals the hand and soul of "OK".

This may be no more than saying that he was an insistent Expressionist, although he rejected the label in public. In private, as his letters show, he acknowledged it, even used it emphatically. In 1913 he claimed to have painted the masterpiece of Expressionism in "Tristan and Isolde", a double portrait of himself and Alma Mahler. In 1921 he announced himself to be both the inventor and leader of

Expressionism. But he does not discuss other Expressionists; in all his writings references to art are quite rare, references to contemporary art virtually non-existent. His attention is fixed on himself. Like Picasso he preferred the company of non-artists, especially of writers. For them he could be the artist, the painter-oracle. He supplied them with anecdotes and explanations, little concerned with accuracy but very much concerned with the overriding truth of his own unique greatness, and they rewarded him with articles and monographs presenting him at his own valuation and in his own terms. Then, in his eighties, he capped their efforts with an autobiography. By that time the *Oberwildling* (Ludwig Heves's half-admiring word means "chief savage" but also hints at "super-Faust"), who once set himself punk-wise against the fringing decadence of Klimt and the Secessionists, had transformed himself into the Great Tradition's last hope, defending it against fascism, communism and capitalist materialism. His art alone could save the world.

The link between those apparent opposites is individualism. Alan Bowness hails him as the great individualist in his foreword to the Tate catalogue. Ernst Gombrich presented him as the artist of individual experience in his essay for the Kokoschka exhibition shown at the Tate in 1962. Conscious individualism is indeed the programme of his art and actions, from those *enfant terrible* days in Vienna to the aged artist's years of teaching at the Salzburg summer School of Seeing. First he had to prove that he was unique; then that he was essential. To one of his most ardent biographers, who reports it without hesitation, he said "What will the young people do without me?"

Collecting and in many instances republishing his writings—four volumes of plays and essays and now also the first two of four volumes of letters—proceed alongside the cataloguing of all his paintings and graphics in order to afford him ultimate monumentalization. The monument may turn out to be his Tower of Babel. Expressionism resists definition and analysis. We are all a little befuddled by the musk of pre-1914 Vienna. Moreover, it seems that Kokoschka magnetized all who came within range of those bright blue eyes. He is not the only modern artist to have worked hard to control his image, but his success until now has been total. The result has been "Kokoschka studies" of a claustrophobic sort.

The new Life by Frank Whitford is, however, brisk and breezy. It retells the myths by which the painter constructed himself: the choirboy's voice breaks and he faints, singing Mozart under Maubert's fresco in the Pfarrkirche; his periodic hallucinations, sure evidence of the gift of second sight; the Russian bayonet piercing his side in fulfilment of the poster's prophecy; and so forth. But we don't have to swallow them. Whitford remains detached; having written well on Schiele as well as Expressionism and the Bauhaus, he shows us Kokoschka as part of a wider world, bringing him out of the hothouse isolation in which his previous biographers, as he had instructed, preferred to leave him. But the many questions raised by Kokoschka's art remain unasked and unanswered.

Kokoschka's death has made it possible at last to view him dispassionately and his letters force us to do so. Whitford had only the first volume at hand, but that is sufficiently full of worldly wisdom to have helped him to keep his feet on the ground. The first three letters show us a Kokoschka adopt at the obsequies that were necessary in order to advance himself; the next three characterize Vienna, and everyone in it, as worthless. Money is mentioned often because he spends it very easily and also because he has to finance his parents and his younger brother. In time he sets them up in a very superior suburban villa; in his spendthrift manner, he prides himself on establishing them *à la d'art*. Meanwhile, there is much asking for and complaining about money. Walden, his first dealer and friend, gets short shrift when Cassirer offers a better contract. As things improve, his family is warned to insist that business is bad: beware of the taxman. Kokoschka was clearly a commercial success yet presents himself in his letters as misunderstood, abused and forever suffering. One goes on reading out of curiosity but with gritted teeth.



A 1936 self-portrait, reproduced from Oskar Kokoschka 1886–1980, which is reviewed below.

Much of that first volume is devoted to his letters to Alma Mahler. They are taken from her transcripts and may not be complete, yet they are full enough of reiterated demands for exclusive attention and of extravagant cries of love, soaring *Tristan* ones and *Schlagobers* ones that in their requirement of nicknames and diminutives—Almi, Almil, Almilzi—echo dead Gustav's variations on Almschilzi. After them came his awesome instructions to the lady doll-maker, exhorting her to make him a substitute Alma, visually and tactically perfect in every part. (He allowed some of those letters to be published in 1926, in a collection of artists' "confessions".) The atmosphere lightens in Volume Two because he is travelling a great deal to paint his land and townscapes, partly also because he now writes to several different women, not always successfully. One of them, Anna Kallin (Niuta, Milina, Mirli, Noisette, Rahel, Benin, Ben) comes out of the one-sided dialogue remarkably well, a much more suitable partner for him than the widow Mahler.

About art we learn very little, even about his own. Anyone who thinks of those 1909–12 portraits as masterpieces of psychological insight, as the cliché has it, should ponder what Kokoschka wrote to his mother at a time when he should have been getting on with the portrait of the art historian Tietze and Mrs. Tietze: he is stuck because he cannot bring himself to draw the man's "boring head". Karl Kraus and Adolf Loos, nodal figures in the Kokoschka promotional network, are the subjects of negative asides too. (The letters to Kraus appear to be lost; those to Loos were not released for publication.) Paris, he writes in 1925, is dirty; stupid and *peil-bourgeois*; Holland is clean and restores his health; but the place to be is London: in the land of the Anglo-Saxons I shall make my way, only first I must learn English and then how to speak to these people (every immigrant can confirm that these are distinct processes). He was to find England an unresponsive milieu.

The Tate Gallery exhibition catalogue, a solid compilation of texts and pictures, must in the end count as another contribution to the hagiographical series. It has a sanctimonious air. It does, however, include an unusually full and factual year-by-year account of Koko-

schka's life by Katharina Schulz, and some positively entertaining glimpses of Kokoschka the teacher provided by Georg Eisler. One essay, by Peter Vergo and Yvonne Modlin, on the artist's play, *Murderer Hope of Women*, suggests what scholarship may yet bring to illuminating his work and thought. Needless to say, Kokoschka had pointed the way in this instance too—writing that he had indeed read Bachofen on matriarchy but, characteristically, implying that he had written the play first—and here is the first good look at the connection.

The Tate exhibition (at the Kunsthaus, Zürich until November 9 and at the Guggenheim Museum, New York from December 9 until February 15, 1987) was outstanding in itself as well as timely: Kokoschka's centenary coincides with renewed interest in figurative, rhetorical painting. It was selected and organized by Richard Calvoccressi, and the catalogue was edited and largely written by him too. His survey of Kokoschka's paintings, phase by phase, initiates a much-needed examination of style in relation to technique. Of the content of, especially, the later work very little is said here, or, indeed, by Whitford in his hurried account of the second half of Kokoschka's life. Calvoccressi also provided the catalogue entries. Selecting the exhibition was his essential critical act and one would not expect all-out objectivity in a memorial celebration of this sort, but I was surprised to find him repeating a suggestion, first made by Edith Hoffmann in 1947 with the painter's blessing and solemnly reiterated ever since, even by Whitford, about the painting "Knight Errant" of 1914–15. The letters "ES" there, scrawled into the sky stand, we are told, for Christ's dying cry, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani". They could mean "it" but they look like initials and I would be tempted either to *chercher la femme* or to read them as referring to the First World War.

Kokoschka was an energetic and stimulating painter and an outstanding draughtsman. In time we shall know whether he was a truly great artist. Meanwhile we owe it to him and to ourselves to play Thomas to his Christ. As his self-made image disintegrates we shall be able to see the man better; we will also be able to see his paintings through our own eyes.

# In the aftermath of empire

Jeremy Adler

**GEORGE SAIKO**  
*Sämtliche Werke in fünf Bänden*  
Band 2: Der Mann im Schilf  
368pp. 3 701 0420 1  
Band 4: Drama und Essays  
320pp. 3 701 0434 1  
Salzburg: Residenz. Sch 278 each  
**ALBERT PARIS GÜTERSLOH**  
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822pp. DM19.80. 3 492 00605 1  
*Der Lügner unter Bürgern*  
218pp. DM11.50. 3 492 00635 3  
*Eine sagenhafter Figur: Ein platonischer Roman*  
820pp. DM14.80. 3 492 00672 8  
*Die Fabel von der Freundschaft: Ein sokratischer Roman*  
240pp. DM12.80. 3 492 00760 0  
Munich: Piper.

Nineteenth-century German writing from Austria had often been parochial, but the demise of the Austro-Hungarian empire initiated a new national literature of European stature. The Austrian novel in particular displays a political maturity calling for the international attention which the nation itself had lost. This is not the least paradox of Musil's *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften* (*The Man without Qualities*). A. P. Gütersloh saw the problem in heroic terms:

There is a small number of authors—and I belong to them—who have seen the final collapse of an empire or which the sun never set, the empire of Charles V, and who have done so from the last essential vestige of that kingdom, known as Austria, and who, with the help of God, have survived it. Not that we, the nearest survivors, have mourned in the usual way for the lost. Oh no! It's true, of course, that being a Greek is more glorious than being a Trojan. However, the more difficult and perhaps even the less glorious task is the more enticing! Such a task cannot just be taken up by the mere shaping desire of a

talent; it must be invented by a guilt-stricken conscience as the most effective funeral rite at the present moment, or as the way to justify hitherto unjustified ancestors. The task, therefore, is to write the biographies of Anchises and Aeneas.

While the stature of a few writers who took up the historical challenge, like Hermann Broch and Robert Musil, seem almost to become widely known. Some, like Heimito von Doderer, have a certain following but have failed to gain wider attention in England and America. Doderer's social panoramas of Austrian life with their vast array of characters linked together in highly intricate plots make a significant contribution to European realism. *Die Dämonen*, Doderer's reworking of Dostoevsky's theme, portrays every facet of Austrian society in the build-up to the burning of the palace of justice in Vienna in 1927, the breath-taking climax to a novel over 1,000 pages long. However, the translation by Richard and Clara Winston (1961) has not fully established Doderer in the English-speaking world, and other major works await translation, notably the novel *Die Strudlhofstiege*.

Other writers of comparable or greater stature are still not well known beyond Austria, among them George Saiko and A. P. Gütersloh. Each produced a voluminous oeuvre, and each wrote one novel on the grand scale which, like Canetti's *Die Blendung* (*Auto da fe*) or Broch's *Die Schlafwandler* (*The Sleepwalkers*), redefined the genre in highly original ways. They share the formal inventiveness and astute intellectuality which, together with a striving for universality, is the hallmark of the Viennese novel. These new editions of their work should at last make them more accessible.

"An Austrian by necessity, an Englishman by choice", George Saiko was born in Bohemia in 1892, and studied art history and psychology (with Freud), before working in Vienna as an actor, film director and translator. During the Second World War, he (like Gütersloh) was forbidden to write by a Nazi "Schreibverbot".

As he later said, he was then employed in the Albertina, where he preserved the collection of drawings "both from the bombs of the allies and from the intervention of the Nazis". He died in 1962. The projected five-volume edition of his works will supersede that published by Benziger. Besides the creative prose, it offers a hitherto unpublished drama (a comedy in the Viennese theatrical tradition), essays, and a selection of letters.

The Viennese writer and critic, Franz Blei, noted how Musil, Broch and Gütersloh arrived at literature via a detour, be it philosophy, mathematics, or (in Gütersloh's case) theology. Saiko's detour was art history. His essays on art and literature (some of which were originally published in English) are now collected for the first time. They make fascinating reading. Saiko adopts the historical method of the Vienna art historians, and combines it with Freudian concepts, to examine modernism. As we can now see retrospectively he thereby prepared the ground for his own novels. From his analyses of Cubism and Surrealism, and of conceptual polarities such as modernism and myth, he progressed to the novel form and defined his own "magical realism" as a literature of psychic processes.

Both of Saiko's novels tackle specifically Austrian themes. The first, *Auf dem Floß* (*On the Raft*) of 1948, is the work by which he will be remembered as one of the century's great novelists. It depicts an almost archaic master-servant relationship as a mythical symbol of the old empire, its downfall, and partial survival in the modern world. Saiko combines traditional epic motifs with the analytic techniques of the psychological novel in a manner which, as Hermann Broch observed, "goes beyond Kafka and Musil".

Saiko's second and last novel, *Der Mann im Schilf* (1955; *The Man in the Reeds*) deals with a chilling historical theme: the attempted Nazi putsch of 1934. Not the major events but psychological minutiae provide the subject-matter. Relentlessly Saiko examines how the

murky inner worlds of his characters merge with the public realm. This is an area where, as he observed, the novel can successfully compete with film. It resembles a thriller in reverse: different stories at first alternate in a confusing montage, but draw ever closer together, and culminate in a sequence of wholly unexpected but thoroughly explicated murders.

The plot presents seemingly unrelated worlds, linked by the main character, Robert. On returning home to Salzburg from an archaeological dig in Greece, Robert stumbles into the new political situation. He is steeped in the civilized (but depraved) habits of liberal culture, and crumbles under the impact of the primitive, more obviously corrupt locals. His initial incomprehension gives way to an understanding of the workings of the putsch, in which he then unwittingly participates. His fate demonstrates that to perceive means to become involved.

The earlier part of the book has many weaknesses. Where it excels is in the depiction of the Nazis' social basis in the country one figure calls "the garbage heap left over by the former monarchy". The uncertainty surrounding the putsch reveals that moral duplicity which Saiko perceives as dictating all seemingly civilized behaviour: "Heil!"—"Heil what?"—"We don't know yet". Inner doubt, moral ambiguity and sexual betrayal intertwine, to culminate in political violence.

Saiko's lucid prose is the very antithesis of Gütersloh's baroque manner, though both share the same striving for an encyclopaedic viewpoint. Where Saiko describes the modern world and its roots in the mythical, Gütersloh set himself the task of presenting the entire universe in symbolic form. Born Albert Konrad Kiehltrieber in 1887, he adopted a series of theatrical aliases, the main one being Albert Paris von Gütersloh. He may have picked Gütersloh (a small town in Germany) by analogy with Henri Beyle's choice of Stendhal. Or, as he later said, he may have picked it because

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he fell in love with three ladies from there, and was left like Paris to choose between them.

APG (as he was also known) was one of the most colourful figures on the Austrian cultural scene and at the centre of artistic activity in Vienna from about 1910. After the Second World War he dominated the worlds of art and literature up to his death in 1973. As an artist, he was a follower of Klimt, a friend of Egon Schiele, and the first to recognize the importance of Arnold Schoenberg as a painter. Later – as a teacher at the academy and president of the Art-Club – he became the father of the Viennese “fantastic realists”, notably Fuchs, Hundertwasser, Hutter and Hausner. By preference he painted small gouaches; he also designed stage-sets, mosaics, stained glass windows and tapestries. It was one of the latter which the Austrian state presented to Princess Elizabeth on the occasion of her wedding to Prince Philip. Politically, Gütersloh was complex. He toyed with communism, was influenced by the “decisionism” of his friend Carl Schmitt, and briefly flirted with Nazism. But throughout his career, he remained (in his own way) a catholic: “The gods decide what we say; how we wish to say it is decided by the divine within us.”

The great Viennese novel begins and ends with Gütersloh. As Musil noted in his diary in or around 1918, Gütersloh's first novel, *Die tanzende Törin* of 1910 (The Dancing Fool) established Expressionism in prose; whilst his *magnus opus Sonne und Mond* (Sun and Moon) was not published until 1962.

“We see our task”, Gütersloh writes, “in the spreading of uncertainty.” This applies to every aspect of his work – as does the dialectic method of this aphorism, which flatly contradicts the eschatological certainties he never ceases to proclaim. Only in his short stories (eg *Fabeln vom Eros*, reviewed in the TLS, January 1, 1949) and the short novel *Ein Lügner unter Bürgern* (translated as *The Fraud*, 1965), does Gütersloh attempt traditional formal structures. Elsewhere, from *Innozenz* (1925) to *Elne sagenhafte Figure* (1949; A Legendary Figure), he creates forms only to overturn them, as if a conventional structure could not contain the truth. Similarly, he reverses traditional stories, as in his Faust novel, *Die Fabel von der Freundschaft* (1971; The Fable of Friendship), where Faust seduces Mephisto into becoming human.

*Sonne und Mond* was a legend long before publication. Edited out of a 2,000-page manu-

script, it also contained a Dictionary, the *Wörterbücher* partly published in 1966 as *Der innere Erdteil* (The Inner Continent). It is indebted to Stendhal and Stifter and above all to *Tristram Shandy*. Sterne's “cyclopaedia of the arts and sciences”, Gütersloh also parodies modern works. As *Ulysses* spans a day, *Sonne und Mond* covers exactly one year; as *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften* remained unfinished, Gütersloh superficially ended his novel, but left a host of unexplained loose ends. Echoing Kafka, he describes a trial, and a castle which for some laboriously explained but ultimately incomprehensible reason becomes invisible at noon. But it is the use of myth and above all theology (recalling Aquinas) which give the book its distinctive character; “Nowhere more than in poetry, which is called thus to shame us, does man reveal that God exists.”

The simple thread of this labyrinthine novel is a historical allegory: Count Lunarin (the “moon”) inherits a dilapidated castle, which he leaves for one year to Till Adelseder (the “sun”), at the end of which he gives it to Till in perpetuity. The castle represents Austria, and the narrative recalls the transition from monarchy to democracy.

It is, however, not the plot, but the frequent digressions which give the book its substance. Echoing Sterne's hobby-horse approach, Gütersloh, compiles his method to a ride through the fields, where one never knows what the horse will kick up on the way to any given goal. In a single year, the narrator roams through several centuries in search of the present and thereby creates “a historical novel of the present day”. The tortuous sentences (sometimes almost beyond parsing) achieve a symbiosis of the fictional and essayistic forms, anticipated in Gütersloh's early definition “The essay is the novella of pure intellect.” The novel forces the reader to think (“The devil take the book that the reader can understand”) and it is up to us to decide whether to take the narrator's more offensive prejudices as valid opinions or as dialectical provocations. If we give up, the book is always ready with its own answers – it “will go on reading itself”.

Gütersloh's writings are so scattered that it is hard to get a fair picture of his achievement. Let us hope that reissuing them in paperback will be the first step to a long deserved reassessment. He may be uneven, tricky, annoying, awkward, or wrong, but Gütersloh's work at its best has a rare beauty and brilliance.

## Need for exaggerations

Stephen Plaice

THOMAS BERNHARD  
Ausscheidung  
651pp. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp. DM48.  
351802597 X

Thomas Bernhard's prose is seamless, not only in the sense that it is unchattered and unparaphrased, but also because the narrative voice always seems to be a direct continuation from his previous books. Bernhard himself has said that all genuine artists are essentially always working on a single work of art. Consistent with this aesthetic, his latest novel contains all his earlier preoccupations – on an existential level, the ubiquitous presence of death and the insoluble paradox of truth, on a political and cultural level, the National Socialist and Catholic connection which controls and has controlled Austria since the Habsburgs. Those readers expecting a familiar diatribe against Church and State will not be disappointed. The title of the book means “Extinction”, and the work is another attempt by Bernhard to extinguish the myth of Austria as a land of culture and civilization.

It takes the form of the autobiographical testimony of Franz-Josef Murau, the intellectual black sheep of a powerful Austrian landowning family. Murau lives in Rome in self-imposed exile from his family, surrounded by a coterie of artistic and intellectual friends. On returning from his sister's wedding to the “wine-cork manufacturer” on the family estate of Wolfsegg, having resolved never to go home again, Murau receives a telegram informing him of the death of his parents and his elder brother in a car-crash. Not only must he now go back, he must do so as the master of Wolfsegg and decide its fate.

The book is divided into two halves: the first, “The Telegram”, explores Murau's memories of Wolfsegg as he stands at his Roman window considering the fateful telegram and some grotesquely posed snapshots of his dead family. The second part, “The Testament”, is a description of his return and the preparations for the funeral. The gloomy architecture of Wolfsegg dominates both halves, though curiously, once the reader is transported there, the house and grounds lose the fascination they had while still confined to memory.

## All over again

J. J. White

PETER HANDKE  
Die Wiederholung  
334pp. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp. DM34.  
351802580 5

“Die Wiederholung”, the “repetition” of the title, has a variety of connotations in Peter Handke's new novel. In its most immediate sense it refers to the attempt of the twenty-two-year-old hero, Filip Kobal, to retrace his brother Gregor's footsteps – to cross the border from his native Austria into Yugoslavia, once the homeland of his ancestors. Armed with little more than his brother's two books, a horticultural work written during his three years at the agricultural college at Maribor and a Slovenian-German dictionary with many of its words revealingly underlined by Gregor, Filip sets out in search of him, on a journey that also represents a reversal of his migrant family's history.

At first Filip's journey seems to have a single definable goal: to trace the vanished brother and so gain some self-knowledge, some form of equanimity which could conceivably counteract memories of a desolate childhood and a general disenchantment with Austria and the modern world. In the young man's eyes his older brother soon assumes the fairy-tale aura of his legendary historical namesake; the Slovenian folk-hero Gregor Kobal. Gradually, however, Filip's quixotic quest is displaced during the course of the narrative; as he escapes from the pressures of time, the pace of his experiences changes and the account becomes more diffuse and leisurely. A sentimental, at times mystical vision of a rustic Yugoslavia which lives and breathes the kind

Murau's early days at Wolfsegg are presented as an anti-paradise. His mother, his sisters and his brother all persecuted and informed on him. His parents took to Nazism without reservation. Even after the war, the children's villa was used to shelter a prominent *Gauleiter* on the run. Special virtue is reserved for the dreadful dominating mother. She has been carrying on an affair with Spandolini, the papal archbishop, for more than thirty years. In moments of high passion, she calls him “my nuncio”. At the end of the book, Spandolini silently presides over the family funeral, the ultimate symbol of the hypocrisy of the Church. The one positive figure in childhood is Uncle George, who educates Murau and opens up the five libraries of Wolfsegg to allow the boy to free himself from the stultifying influence of his family.

Throughout the book, Murau is delaying work on his projected autobiography to be called “Extinction”, the writing of which, he hopes, will allow him to extinguish the memory of Wolfsegg and his family entirely. All his life he has lived in contradiction with them. Bernhard sees contradictions (Gegensätze) at the heart of reality, excluding the possibility of truth. Italy is opposed to Austria, Rome to Wolfsegg, Murau to his family. But there is a third element in this book which has not appeared elsewhere in Bernhard's work – self-criticism. Murau has come to hate his own hatred and to feel an inkling of generosity towards those who are unable to lead thinking lives. He realizes also that the weakness, hypocrisy and ugliness he sees in others are at the same time his own. Wolfsegg is still part of him. On his return he finds himself at times actually behaving as if he were the proprietor of the estate. But ultimately, this only turns out to be the final contradiction for him. Murau resolves it by handing over the whole estate to the Israeli Cultural Association in Vienna, and by dying soon after, perhaps by his own hand.

There are some new targets here for Bernhard's lofty jets of bile. Photography is held responsible for the acceleration of cultural decline. A broadside is also launched against the pseudo-Socialism that has dominated Austrian politics in the past decade. Bernhard, still firmly inside the great German tradition he despises, now styles himself as the great exaggerator. He believes that only by exaggerating can the truth be obtained in contemporary Austria.

of freedom that has so far eluded the hero progressively deflects him from his ostensible goal. To “repeat” in this context also means to try to recapture (*wiederholen* can literally mean to “fetch back”), and it refers not just to the relationship between the brothers, but to the Austrian's relationship to Yugoslavia and the protagonist writer's to his material. Indeed, the most far-reaching of the title's connotations concerns the imagination and, in particular, the act of writing. Gregor's two books point mysteriously in this direction. Just as his horticultural writings are described as an exercise in giving meaning to things “by ordering them”, so for Filip memory is not just a matter of recalling the past but of finally giving it its “true place” by allowing it to happen again.

In a further twist to this idea, Handke has his narrator remark somewhat cryptically that “to repeat does not mean to say ‘Once upon a time’ but ‘start afresh’”. The Yugoslavian journey in this sense acts as a catalyst in Filip's life. For the novel ends in this spirit with him leaving the alien theatre of so many mystical experiences and returning, a transformed man, to a new ecstatic sense of belonging to his former world. However, it is in seeking to communicate this ecstasy and new vision that the novel encounters difficulties.

Handke's early fiction grew out of the same desire to de-familiarize language that had characterized his work for the theatre. There were admittedly times when his narrators and protagonists could be vexingly self-piaistic or arch in their linguistic self-awareness, but their observations were invariably striking for the consistency of purpose and intellectual rigour. More recently, however, and *Die Wiederholung* is a case in point, elements of mysticism and utopianism have introduced an awkward tone into his writing.

## The battle and the books

Edward Timms

MURRAY G. HALL  
Österreichische Verlagsgeschichte 1918–1938  
Band 1, 427pp.  
Band 2, 600pp.  
Vienna: Böhlau. 980SCh.  
320507258 8

The politics of the declining Habsburg Empire have been memorably analysed by English and American historians; and the cultural map of Vienna has been decisively redrawn by Carl Schorske, Claudio Magris, William Johnston, Allan Janik and Stephen Toulmin. Writers from outside seem to have had fewer inhibitions than the Austrians themselves in exploring the problematic interaction between culture and politics.

Murray G. Hall's history of the Austrian publishing houses continues this tradition. Although the book is written in German, its author is a Canadian. He is one of those *gelehrte Wiener* who has learnt so much about what it means to be Viennese that his knowledge exceeds that of the Austrians themselves. And he has the outsider's readiness to ask awkward questions about the cultural politics of the 1930s, which until recently have tended to be ignored. He has also shown unusual stamina in working his way through official archives which have been gathering dust for upwards of fifty years. The result is a monumental work of scholarship which has provoked considerable controversy, and has already led to a court action.

One would hardly have expected this of such a book, particularly as Hall concentrates on literary publishing, ignoring periodical journalism and the political press. Moreover, his approach is very traditional – a scholarly reconstruction, which quotes so copiously from archival sources that it tends to make for heavy reading. The first volume describes the socio-economic and legal constraints which inhibited the development of literary publishing in Austria, until it acquired a sudden surge of vitality during the politically precarious decades 1918–38. The second volume, designed as a work of reference rather than as a consecutive narrative, contains short histories of over a hundred

individual publishers.

Vienna never became a publishing centre comparable to Frankfurt, Leipzig or Berlin. Hall shows that this was due partly to repressive censorship, but above all to the reluctance of the Habsburg authorities to accept international copyright agreements. The Berne Convention of 1887 was designed to inhibit the trade in unauthorized translations, which flourished particularly in the minority-language areas of the Habsburg Empire. Since Austria did not subscribe to the Convention until 1920, almost all its leading authors had their work published in Germany, where copyright was better protected. The weakness of the home market meant that Austrian publishers, who were remarkably successful in certain specialized fields, were heavily dependent on exports to Germany. This economic imbalance was to have disastrous political consequences.

Conditions after the collapse of the Habsburg monarchy initially provided new incentives for publishing. And during the early years of the Republic a plethora of new firms were founded (many of them very short-lived). Not surprisingly, Jewish firms were particularly prominent. There was a long and distinguished tradition of Jewish publishing in the German-speaking area, and the Jewish community in Vienna numbered about 200,000 (in a total population of 2 million). These newly founded firms had to face a series of financial crises during the 1920s. But these difficulties pale into insignificance by comparison with the political pressures to which they were subjected after the Nazi seizure of power in Germany. The importance attached by the Nazis to the “purification” of German literature was signalled in 1933 by the burning of the books. And imports from Austria were subjected to increasingly stringent political and administrative controls. As a result, Hall's account of publishing relationships between Germany and Austria forms a microcosm of the larger political struggle.

Hall's book shows that the German military take-over of Austria in March 1938 was anticipated by an insidious process of ideological penetration. Although the Austrian Government might formally ban the Nazi Party (as they did the Communists and Social Demo-

crats) in an attempt to maintain an independent (though autocratic) régime, the publishers were financially so dependent on the German market that they began to succumb to Nazi influence long before the stormtroopers marched into Vienna. Some smaller firms defied these pressures by continuing to publish authors who in Germany had been placed on the index. But others soon adjusted to the demands of the new ideology.

The Paul Zsolnay Verlag, the most important Austrian publisher of this period, provides Hall with his prime example. This firm made its reputation by publishing the work of internationally respected authors like John Galsworthy, H. G. Wells, Franz Werfel and Heinrich Mann. Since over 70 per cent of its sales were in the German Reich, it was particularly vulnerable to the ban imposed by the Nazis on “undesirable” books (not least because Zsolnay was of Jewish origin). The Nazi boycott of his products brought Zsolnay by 1934 to the verge of bankruptcy. His only alternatives were either to sell his firm, or to convert it into an enterprise acceptable to the Nazis. Zsolnay opted for conversion. Politically compromising authors like Werfel and Heinrich Mann were dropped, to be replaced by nationalistic writers who would find approval in Germany. Hall unfolds this story judiciously, showing that the firm was in an impossible dilemma. But some of the documents he reproduces were felt by the present directors of the Zsolnay Verlag to be so compromising that they reportedly attempted to have Hall's book suppressed before publication.

What happened to Austrian publishers after the German army marched into Vienna forms the most gruesome chapter in the book. It is not simply that pro-Nazi mobs went on the rampage. The new régime introduced a systematic programme of “aryanization”. All Jewish citizens had to declare their assets – an elaborate process, since there were thousands of Jewish businesses in Vienna, including a hundred or more in the publishing and book trades. What followed was an uncanny blend of bureaucracy and sadism. Elaborate documents were drawn up to “legalize” the transfer of once-flourishing Jewish businesses to “Aryan” successors, promising payment by instalments spread over a number of years. But the real

incentive to sign was the threat of the concentration camp (the first convoy left Vienna for Dachau on April 1, 1938). And those lucky enough to be allowed to leave the country were permitted to take with them a maximum of 10 German marks.

By May 1939 about 150 Jewish publishers and booksellers had reportedly been “aryanized” or suppressed. But what looks to the outside observer like daylight robbery was enshrined by the Nazi authorities in the language of legitimacy. It is this which made it so difficult, after 1945, for the culprits to be punished and the Jewish survivors to obtain compensation. Of the publishers who took legal action, after the defeat of Nazism, to have their assets restored, it seems that only one – Brüder Rosenbaum – was successful. In other cases the courts declared the transactions of 1938 to be legitimate. The heirs of the old-established firm of Moritz Perles, for example, were unable to make good their claims against his Aryan successors, Brüder Hollinek.

Hall's account of the Perles case is one of the few points in this thousand-page narrative where he allows his scholarly restraint to slip. In an uncharacteristic phrase he describes Perles as the victim of the “vultures of aryanization”, adding that “nothing was paid” by Hollinek for one of Perles's most valuable assets. For these incautious phrases Hall has been taken to court by Hollinek's heirs, who allege that his remarks are defamatory. The fact that Perles – like a number of other publishers – perished in a concentration camp has not deterred those who benefited from his expropriation from taking legal action. Whether the court finds in their favour may well depend on the testimony of Perles's son, a witness to the events of 1938, who now lives in the United States.

Whatever the outcome of this sorry tale, its wider implications are clear. Hall's research has breached the consensus in Austria that it is better to forgive and forget the events of 1938–45. Austria (we are given to understand) was Hitler's first victim, not his willing accomplice. It is clear that this self-righteousness has not enhanced Austria's reputation. Fortunately there is now a younger generation of writers who share with Hall the determination to ask more searching questions.

## The view from the British legation

Anthony Glees

F. L. CARSTEN  
The First Austrian Republic 1918–1938: A study based on British and Austrian documents  
309pp. Gower/Maurice Temple Smith. £22.50.  
036005162 1

The questions are simple enough: why did Austria's first attempt at liberal democracy fail? Were the Austrians forcibly Nazified or did a majority of them gladly seek incorporation into the Third Reich? As for the answers, they have hitherto tended to favour Austria, which has enjoyed an altogether cosier historical reputation than its neighbour Germany. During the Second World War British politicians decided that Austria should be portrayed as the first victim of Nazi aggression rather than as Hitler's staunch ally and even today, despite the emergence of an unambiguous new political right in Austria (and, of course, the *affaire Waldheim*), historians seem to have turned a blind eye to the Austrian dimension of the careers of leading Nazis like Ernst Kaltenbrunner, Adolf Eichmann, and indeed Adolf Hitler himself. The fact that Hitler learned his antisemitism in Vienna and not Berlin is often neglected.

F. L. Carsten's revealing and important book will do much to provide a more balanced view of Austria's recent past (and an excellent case study of the rise of European Fascism as well). Carsten convincingly argues that an analysis of his internal politics shows that the collapse of liberal Austria in March 1933 and its annexation by the Nazis in 1938 were largely caused by the strong domestic factors militating in their favour.

His book is not a comprehensive history of the first Austrian Republic but rather an interpretation of Austrian politics as perceived by the British legation in Vienna between 1918 and 1938 when, to appease Austria's new Nazi masters, it was replaced by a consulate. The legation's papers make fascinating if depressing reading. For one thing, its diplomats were, on the whole, good at their job. In the 1920s and 1930s British diplomats overseas were meant to provide proper political intelligence about the countries in which they served (today they seem to spend a lot of their time trying to sell British goods). If British foreign policy often appeared unwise, it was not because diplomatic field-workers did not see what was going on but because their political masters in Whitehall preferred not to draw the obvious conclusions from their reports.

One example Carsten gives is the legation's accurate (if ice-cold) monitoring of Austrian antisemitism. Between 1918 and 1938 it detailed a host of sickening incidents. Yet, although the policy-makers in London realized that something terrible was happening to Austrian Jews (the Lord Privy Seal helped to arrange Freud's escape from Vienna) the appeasers were not diverted from their chosen course. Objective evidence of Nazi aims was not allowed to get in the way of High Policy.

There is, therefore, rather more to this book than the straightforward provision of eyewitness accounts of Austria's collapse into Hitler's arms, since it also says much about British foreign policy-making. Carsten is cautious (rather too cautious) about developing this aspect of his book although he hints at times that alternative policies (in particular from a Labour-led government) might have worked. But he does imply that it is futile to pursue a foreign policy towards hostile forces based on

wishful thinking and a prior abrogation of force. And in one sense, he must be right. Once Austrian democracy had collapsed, the success of Fascism, now supported by its German friends, was inevitable.

But could Britain have done more to prevent the collapse of democracy? Certainly our men in Vienna did not believe it was doomed from the start. Although the picture in 1918 and 1919 was one of lawlessness and famine (which, as Carsten demonstrates, the British did a great deal to alleviate) the legation did not panic: “the Viennese are extraordinarily docile and quiet. Bolshevism is most unlikely.” Another embassy employee, Lewis Namier, wrote, also at this time, “In her days of greatness Austria has never had such a decent government and such able statesmen as she has got now.” The 1923 Hitler putsch caused scarcely a ripple in Austria (despite massive inflation) and even the paramilitary (and Fascist) Heimwehr were “constitutional” groups and merely “anxious” about Bolshevism.

Barely ten years later, however, another British diplomat (also a historian) produced a completely different story: E. H. Carr wrote, baldly, that “independent Austria is dead; the heir to the estate is either Italy or Germany... the German solution is recognised as inevitable.” This wasn't, incidentally, a view relished by the Foreign Office: Robert Vansittart reminded his colleagues (and himself) that British policy had to be to try to prevent an *Anschluss*: “I prefer a 13-stone Germany to a 15-stone Germany.” Austria's demise did not come for another four years, but Carr's prognosis was justified.

What had gone wrong? Carsten puts forward various causes. Like Weimar Germany (with whom it had much in common) Austria suffered from severe structural defects: it was the successor State to a vanquished empire; it was

desperately divided (between classes and between town and country); it had to contend with an armed right-wing opposition, based on veterans' associations, who were opposed (often very violently) to the actual form of the State itself. The opposition's activities were certainly the vital precondition for Austria's incorporation into the Third Reich. Indeed, Eichmann told his Israeli interrogators how he had been recruited directly into the SS from the Linz veterans' association by a fellow citizen of Linz, Ernst Kaltenbrunner, who was to succeed Heydrich as “security” chief of Nazi Germany.

In short, even though Britain (and France) could and should have done far more to suppress Austria's private Fascist armies, there was not much else to try except force and that was out of the question; without a broad pro-Republican consensus within Austria, British policy was bound to be hamstrung. Thus there was little left for the legation to do in 1938 except to record Hitler's rapturous welcome in Austria and pack their cases: the prodigal son had returned home in triumph. Perhaps Clano's interpretation of these events was right, when he said that no one could force the Austrians to be independent of Germany if they did not wish to be.

Carsten remarks at the end of his book that it took the *Anschluss* with Germany to make the Austrians see the folly of an *Anschluss*. By analogy, it seems that it took the experience of Fascism to make them (or at least a majority of them) appreciate the horror of Fascism.

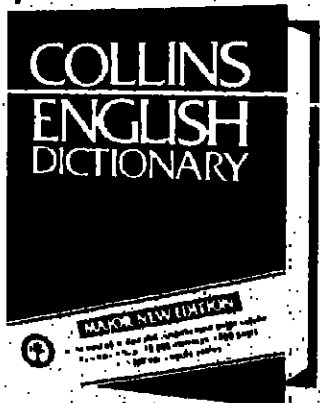
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# Between loyalty and truth

Ernest Gellner

JOHN KEANE (Editor)  
The Power of the Powerless: Citizens against the state in central-eastern Europe  
228pp. Hutchinson. £16.95.  
0091 60306

Václav Havel, the principal contributor to *The Power of the Powerless*, is a superb playwright and a man of great personal courage and integrity. What emerges from his long and important essay in this collection of articles by dissident Czechoslovak writers, is that he is also a political thinker of the highest order. His inquiry consists of a despairing effort to comprehend his own predicament, that of his nation, and that of Eastern Europe.

Havel calls his situation the "post-totalitarian system", not in the sense that it is no longer totalitarian, but because it is totalitarian in a new way. A parallel is obviously intended with "post-industrial society", with which, according to Havel, the system overlaps. I think he is right in considering this to be a new kind of social order.

Havel picks out five distinguishing features of the Czech system: it is locked in with a wider power bloc; it has deep historical roots; it has an elaborate yet very flexible ideology, which covers all aspects of life, and insists on a Byzantine Caesar-Papism – the Third Rome has transmitted the heritage of the Second – which fuses the fount of truth and the fount of power; it pervades the whole of society by its well-matured elaboration and above all by being the sole employer, thus adding economic monopoly to the political and ideological; and at the same time it is routinized, lacks ardour and is permeated by Western consumerism. Every single one of these traits, it should be noted, distinguishes post-1948, and especially post-1968, Czechoslovak communism, from the Nazi rule of 1939–45, which Havel also experienced. But, important though these two systems are, they do not constitute an adequately broad base for the comparative study of totalitarianism.

Whether or not we agree with Havel's account in detail, it deserves the greatest respect:

In highly simplified terms, it could be said that the post-totalitarian system has been built on foundations laid by the historical encounter between dictatorship and the consumer society.

After the war, some Czechs hoped to be the bridge between East and West. Jan Masaryk said so in 1945 and was obliged to retract, because such implied symmetry between East and West was offensive to communists. It turns out that Czechs were to be merely the bridge between Ford and Stalin.

The feature of the system which strikes Havel most forcefully, and which he describes with great vividness, is the tension engendered within it between loyalty and truth. Anyone who refuses to live a lie, however little he may be interested in reforming or defying the system, finds himself pushed towards dissidence. E. M. Forster could allow himself the silly, self-righteous and complacent remark about preferring to betray his country rather than his friend, because his country never put any pressure on him to betray a friend. The number of people in England who know that a friend of theirs is a mole, and who consequently face this dilemma, must be rather small, and even they face no sanctions if they simply choose to keep quiet. In contrast, "post-totalitarian society" requires betrayal as a matter of daily routine. By involving everyone, for instance, in denouncing "Chartists" (the signatories of Charta 77), with whom in fact people generally sympathize, it endeavours to secure general complicity and non-solidarity. In Eastern Europe, the idea that it is better to deceive the state than to deceive a friend is a commonplace truism; not a badge of evil Enlightenment. It takes courage to live up to it, but it requires no illumination to apprehend it. Everyone knows it. It defines his self-conscious elite.

So men often become dissidents despite themselves, having started without any such intention, simply by drawing the line at a certain point. The traitor renders one of the terms officially used to describe the dissident, "one who has fallen out", but a

more accurate translation might be "one who has dropped off", with a distinct and pejorative suggestion of a branch or fruit which has fallen because it is rotten. Havel seems sensitive to the slur and goes out of his way to describe how people are led to fall away not from any aspiration to do so, but simply because they choose to "live within the truth". The minimal level of officially acceptable conformity requires sustained mendacity and, according to temperament and circumstance, a certain number of people find at some point that the lie sticks in their throat.

Now it seems to me that Havel is wrong in thinking that there is anything new in the divergence between inner truth and political constraint. A tension between public orthodoxy and private conviction is not uncommon in human societies, and least of all in Czech history. It is the one proudly Catholic contributor to the volume, Václav Benda, who honourably goes out of his way to observe that his Church had provided the Party with good precedents. Once before, all that earlier "Yalta" held in Westphalia, which divided Europe up along ideological lines and ended the Wars of Religion in the seventeenth century, the Czechs found themselves on the wrong side of a line drawn on the principle *Cuius regio eius religio*. On that occasion, public orthodoxy eventually prevailed and all but extinguished Czech culture. Why is it that the Second Counter-Reformation imposed by communism is finding it so hard to emulate the achievements of the First? Why is the Third Rome less persuasive than the First?

To answer that question, one might consider the social contract which the Czechoslovak authorities offer to the citizens of their state, basing that consideration partly on Havel's own account. The authorities say tacitly: we offer you the best that is available in our circumstances. We are even less interested in the official doctrine than you are, in fact we are too stupid to understand it and too corrupt to care, but we need some signal of adequate submission, so as to run the state. If we allowed you to defy us by heeding a truth not under our control, our authority would soon crumble, as it did in 1968. If you make it impossible for us to govern, we shall be replaced by a worse and more oppressive team, aided perhaps by another bout of fraternal military assistance from our great socialist ally. We oppress you relatively little – consider the mildness of the sentences and the great attention we now pay to procedural propriety, whenever we put one of you on trial, which we do as little as we can. And are you not rather well off? Most of you at any rate have never had it so good. So let us get on with it.

The trouble with this speech – which in the decent privacy of inner consciousness, or between friends who trust each other, must be rehearsed countless times each day in Prague – is that it contains an undeniable element of truth. Where is its weakest link? It is, precisely, in its last item, the promise of relative and acceptable affluence. Those who hear the speech are indeed incomparably better off than their fathers. But they are not better off than the inhabitants of liberal societies, such as, for instance, nearby Austria.

Suppose for a moment that this régime, like past oppressors engaged in imposing an unpalatable culture on subject populations, only had to deal with peasantry injured to a stable and miserable material condition, and a numerically smaller gentry which was replaceable, and which could be offered the option of either submission or exile. This was the Czech condition in the second half of the seventeenth century. In such circumstances, would not the régime succeed? But this is not the present situation. The communist régimes of Eastern Europe are inexorably locked into a world which grants legitimacy only to politics providing a tolerable and growing standard of living, judged by the uniquely high and rising standards of our century. It cannot allow the technological gentry to emigrate, without further economic cost. The maintenance and enhancement of such a standard, however, requires a technically efficient, meritocratic society, cognitively open, in which conscientiousness, work and integrity, and hence truth, are rewarded, or at least tolerated.

The best parable of this current condition of the Czech nation is Havel's experience while

working in a brewery in 1974:

My immediate superior was . . . Š., a person well versed in the art of making beer. He was proud of his profession and wanted our brewery to brew good beer. He spent most of his time at work, continuously thinking up improvements.

Š.'s conscientiousness made him a nuisance to his politically oriented superiors and he ended up sacked and stigmatized: "He had become the 'dissident' of the Eastern Bohemian Brewery." This is the heart of the matter: a good brewer, but a bad Communist – *ein guter Muzikant, aber schlechter Sozialist*. Yet any failure to brew good beer strikes at the heart of Czech well-being.

But the story highlights one crucial error in Havel's analysis – his castigation of consumerism. No doubt he is repelled by the way in



Jan Zrzavý's "Grief", 1918, is one of the sixty-seven prints that are reproduced in Irena Goldschneider's Czechoslovak Prints from 1900 to 1970 (51pp, with 44pp of plates. British Museum. £9.95. 07141 1631 9). It is part of the gift of a collection of 108 works by thirty-nine Czech artists, which has been assembled by the National Gallery in Prague and exchanged for a group of British prints, from Blake and Gillray to Paulozzi and Hockney, in the British Museum. The Czechoslovak collection is on show at the British Museum until January 11.

which the bribe of even a small dose of affluence can buy the conformity of some. But it is precisely the need to offer even this pitifully small bribe and procure this degree of conformity which also obliges the régime to display traits that surprise Havel – the relative mildness, the new but strong penchant for procedural propriety. The imperatives of consumption create a situation in which truth receives support, in some measure, in its conflict with political fiction and rubbish. Consumerism cannot be satisfied without the help of a large class of people who need to live in truth, to judge performance by efficiency not conformity, simply in order to do their work properly. If you want them to deliver, you must make some concession to the kind of cultural atmosphere they need. Toadyism and institutionalized mendacity are economically counter-productive. The Czech national motto proclaims – no irony was intended – that "Truth will Prevail". Perhaps they should add, "but have patience". But if ever it does prevail, it may have consumerism to thank. It was economic failure which provided the liberals of the Prague Spring and of Polish Solidarity with adequate working-class support. It is relative economic success which has given the Hungarian régime the leeway to secure toleration for a fairly relaxed internal atmosphere. Greed may in the short term be a friend to liberty, at least under modern conditions, in which simple rapacity is counter-productive. The greedy need to be tolerant and restrain their ideological intransigence.

Havel turns against consumerism, partly, I suppose, under the influence of the Frankfurt critique of liberal society, which wrongly claims that affluence deprives us of the capacity to dissent, and partly perhaps because he fears that successful consumerism will fortify the system. His attempt at a general theory and critique of post-industrial society is much less convincing than his perceptive account of the socialist world and its unique character. He is original and profound when he describes the specifics of his own predicament, and that of his fellows. He is derivative and superficial when he tries to tell us that we are all in the same boat.

All the same, in a sense, I do agree with him. Consumerism, government by perpetual bribery, is not a viable permanent option for mankind – for ecological reasons, because of the diminishing marginal effectiveness of bribes, because of the self-defeating nature of nominally material, but in fact symbolic bribes, which neutralize each other when everyone has access to them. So we shall have to find some other way of sustaining an acceptable social order. But, given the current state of East European economies, this is not something to be placed on the agenda for quite some time. They can worry about affluence when they have it. So in the mean time, I am sorry to see Havel spurn his most potent ally.

There are other points at which one may be tempted to disagree with him. He is too powerful a thinker to be patronized by an avoidance of the disagreements. Partly perhaps to rationalize and justify the defeat of 1968, Havel insists on the manner in which the system permeates and corrupts the souls of its members, invoking, significantly, Husák, Gomulka and Dubček, but not Kadar. The relative Magyar success is not given its due consideration. Yet it is no purity of soul which explains it. The Prague Spring offered the Russians maximum provocation and minimum deterrence, and so it failed; but its failure is not to be explained by ideological blinkers on the part of Dubček. On the contrary: if only he had paid more attention to what Lenin says about power, his prospects might have been better.

Here, once again, what Havel says conflicts with his other observations, notably about the manner in which the line between submission and dissent runs not so much between people as within them. By now, the permeation of the rulers by scepticism is more profound, even if not immediately effective politically, than the corruption of the ruled. This makes the entire system very volatile, as 1968 and later Polish developments have highlighted. Change could arrive with dramatic suddenness once individuals decide that others, too, are ready for change, and that the day for living in truth once again has arrived. They could come to display solidarity with even greater speed than that with which they were induced to betray each other as a matter of routine. No doubt the authorities are well aware of all this. The strategy which ruthlessly isolates Chartists, while trying to bribe others by a measure of cultural concession, is inspired by the sense of a latent avalanche, which could easily be triggered off at any time. The procedural formalism is of course an insurance against a change of wind.

The volume contains other significant contributions. Václav Benda attempts to develop a Czech-Catholic version of High Church Toryism, of a *Realpolitik* which abjures all secular messianisms, though it appears that the details remain to be worked out. Benda, a man who, like Havel, has proved his courage, goes on to repudiate the conventional Hussite interpretation of Czech history as "absurd". Though interesting and deserving of fuller elaboration, this seems as unconvincing as Steven Lukes's attempt, in his introduction, to enlist or retain these authors in the "socialist tradition". Lukes admits that they have lost all interest in "socialism with a human face", but, strangely, interprets their relative lack of concern with economic organization as some kind of re-endorsement of socialism. But these men are concerned with liberty and legality within a given social order, not with its redrafting. I also find an Oxbridge don's implicit rebuke of Magyar consumerism embarrassing. One eats well in Budapest, but not as well, nor as much, as one does at High Table.

As an important contribution to the analysis and documentation of "real socialism", this book should be read jointly with Milán Šimečka's remarkable work *The Restoration of Order* (1984), and with Sládeček's '68, not yet, alas, available in translation. As Havel says, the system is unique. We have to live with it, and to understand the predicament of those condemned to live in it.

In preparing for the interviews, Toranska certainly did her homework: she has read books, memoirs and articles published in the West and not readily available in Poland. But her history is sometimes shaky, and the presumption of her subjects' unmitigated wickedness often leads her into gratuitous outbursts of moral indignation. Why, she sternly inquires, did they not oppose Stalin's policies more effectively? Why did they not appeal "to international public opinion" when the Soviet armies seized Polish cattle and industrial equipment and shipped them off to Russia? Why did they acquiesce in the incorporation of Poland's eastern territories into the Soviet Union? Why did they not tell the truth about the outcome of the national referendum and elections in 1947?

To these questions her informants, not surprisingly, respond either with amused condescension ("Darling, you really don't know what you are talking about") or by putting her straight about some refractory facts of life. In doing so they reveal more than they seem to realize. How could she possibly imagine, asks Jakob Berman (after the war the second most powerful man in the country), that the Polish Communists were in a position to ask "international public opinion" to help them get rid of their rapacious allies? And why should they not have falsified the results of the elections, if their aim – as he admits without a trace of embarrassment – was to stay in power? And, as

# Coercive utopia

Abraham Brumberg

TERESA TORANSKA  
Oni  
365pp. ANEKS, 61 Dorset Road, London W5 4HX. £7.  
0906 601 223  
JAN JÓZEF LIPSKI  
KOR: A history of the Workers' Defense Committee in Poland, 1976–1981  
561pp. University of California Press. £33.95.  
0520 05243 9

How did the Communist régime in Poland come into being? In an interview published in the November 1985 issue of the underground quarterly *Kultura Niezależna* (Independent Culture), the poet Zbigniew Herbert accused the régime's "founding fathers" of having arrived in Poland on the coat-tails of the Red Army and of having set out to transplant the Soviet model of "socialism" to their native country, even though they were fully aware of all its abominations. In another version, first propounded by the "native" Polish Communists (that is, those who stayed on Polish soil during the Nazi occupation) and later taken up by a good part of the ruling Party and State apparatus, the "Muscovites" all turn out to be Jews whose enmity towards Polish national aspirations was directly responsible for Stalinist rule in Poland. It is a version that emerges occasionally from the pages of *Oni* (They), first published in the Polish underground press and subsequently reissued by the émigré London quarterly ANEKS.

*Oni* consists of interviews with seven former leaders (six men and one woman) of the Polish Communist party, conducted by a young journalist, Teresa Toranska. That so many former party dignitaries should willingly submit themselves to such searching and unfriendly questions in itself tells us something about the unusual nature of contemporary Poland. (The conversations, begun during the somewhat euphoric period of 1980–81, were resumed shortly after the declaration of martial law in December 1981, and lasted well into 1984.)

For Toranska, those she interviewed – all of whom had embarked on their political careers in the 1920s – were figures out of an ancient and largely unfamiliar past, as they are indeed to most Poles. Some have been either expelled or discreetly retired; one – Edward Ochab, who preceded Gomulka as First Secretary – relinquished all his positions in 1968 in protest against his successor's antisemitic witch-hunt. Their roles in the consolidation of Communist rule in Poland, as well as their activities up to Gomulka's accession to power in 1956, have been bowdlerized and distorted by the official historiographers in the course of the fierce internecine struggles that have shaken the régime since its inception; thus their detailed testimony constitutes an invaluable source of information.

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Berman scoffs, "For that matter, we can't have free elections now, either, perhaps even less now than ten or twenty years ago, because we would lose. No doubt about it. So what sense is there in such elections?"

It is welcome news that *Oni* will quite soon be made accessible to English readers (Collins Harvill are to publish a translation early next year), for not only does it contain a wealth of historical detail – including fascinating anecdotes about Stalin, Khrushchev and Gomulka – it also sheds light on the men and women who left their indelible mark on contemporary Polish reality.

So does Jan Józef Lipski's *KOR: A history of the Workers' Defense Committee in Poland, 1976–1981*. The author was one of the founders of KOR, which, as he writes, the single most important "factor in the reprogramming of social life" in Poland; indeed it was "necessary to the creation of Solidarity" in 1980. It was established by a handful of people in the summer of 1976, following an outbreak of industrial unrest, to which the authorities reacted with their usual brutality. Its initial aims were simple: to provide beaten and arrested workers with free legal aid, and their families with financial and medical assistance; and also to mobilize public opinion, both in Poland and abroad, in support of persecuted workers and against political repression in general.

These aims were revolutionary in their implications, signifying a radical departure from the established pattern of political opposition in Poland, in which the intelligentsia on the one hand, and the industrial proletariat on the other, had pursued their goals in splendid isolation and mutual indifference (if not outright hostility). Thus in early 1968, when intellectuals and students took to the streets in protest against the authorities, workers remained stonily silent, some of them even falling prey to the official campaign that portrayed the intellectuals as "enemies of the working class" and agents of "international Zionism". Conversely, less than two years later, when the shipyard workers on the Baltic coast rebelled against sudden price increases and were mowed down by army bullets, the disaffected Polish intelligentsia, still smarting from its 1968 defeat, failed to speak up.

KOR put an end to this state of affairs. Henceforth workers could count not only on the direct support of the intelligentsia, but also – given the latter's ties to the outside world – on the sympathy of the international community. KOR's appeals for financial aid were successful at home and abroad. Lawyers volunteered their services; idealistic young men and women appeared at the homes of arrested workers bearing food, clothing and advice on how to deal with the authorities. Donations (which KOR scrupulously detailed) kept pouring in; leaflets and news-sheets were distributed throughout the country, and the Western media were provided with the latest information on trials and police harassment. Within a year, largely because of the energetic efforts of KOR and its sympathizers, all of the accused workers were set free.

KOR membership, astonishingly, never exceeded fifty or sixty persons. Yet the institutions it spawned drew on the active participation of hundreds if not thousands of people in sympathy with its goals. By 1978, these institutions included an "Intervention Bureau", set up to investigate and report on police abuses and political repression; a remarkably productive publishing house, NOWA; several political and literary quarterlies; and an Information Bulletin. Its bi-weekly newspaper, *Robotnik* (The Worker), advocated the creation of "free trade union committees"; in August 1979 it published a "Charter of Workers' Rights" which prefigured the demands later embodied in the Gdańsk Accord. In addition, KOR could claim that it was at least indirectly responsible for the rise of the so-called "student solidarity committees" and of several "peasant self-defence committees". The "Flying University", which under the aegis of a number of distinguished scholars began to offer unofficial courses in private apartments, was to a large extent the creation of people associated with KOR.

In retrospect, KOR was unique not only because of its extraordinary range of activities but also – perhaps even more – because of its ideological pedigree. The goal of "socialism"

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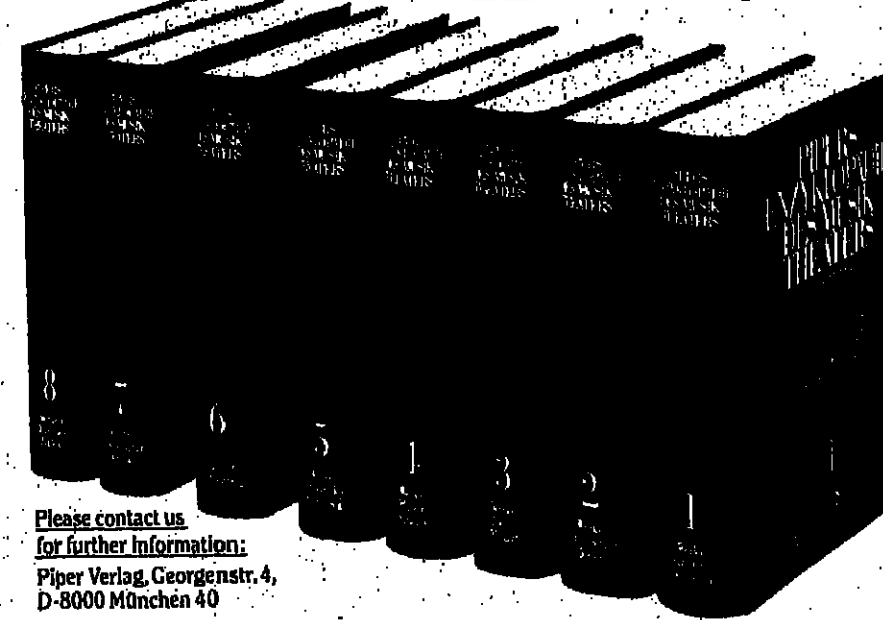
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to which Lipski pays a touching tribute in the penultimate chapter of the book, long ago lost its lustre for the vast majority of Poles, misruled and exploited by a self-proclaimed "socialist" régime. Five years after KOR was established, the First Congress of Solidarity voted to eliminate the words "socialist social thought" from the list of traditions whose influence its programme acknowledged. Yet it was precisely socialist ideals which animated a good many of the founders and members of KOR.

Lipski, a gentle and generous man, does not conceal his disdain for opposition groups addicted, as he says, to "nationalism and xenophobia". Yet in his commendable desire to pay tribute to the achievements of KOR's rivals and competitors he tends to blunt and gloss over some of their unsavoury features. Thus he describes the Young Poland Move-

ment, centred primarily in Gdańsk, as being heir to the pre-war pseudo-fascist National Democrats, "but without anti-Semitism, with a moderate nationalist ideology, without a trace of fascist ideology". In fact the programme of this group, as spelt out in its organ *Polityka Polska*, explicitly excludes from its concept of a Pole any member of the country's national minorities; it rejects antisemitism not as a matter of principle, but because "Jews practically don't exist in Poland, and the revival of Polish anti-Semitism is not in the Polish interest"; and it is contemptuous of democratic values: in the Poland of the future, "the participation of the masses... cannot be systematic and constant. It can take the form of participation in elections and major political campaigns. It consequently has what might be called a ceremonial character."

By the same token Lipski's accounts of the

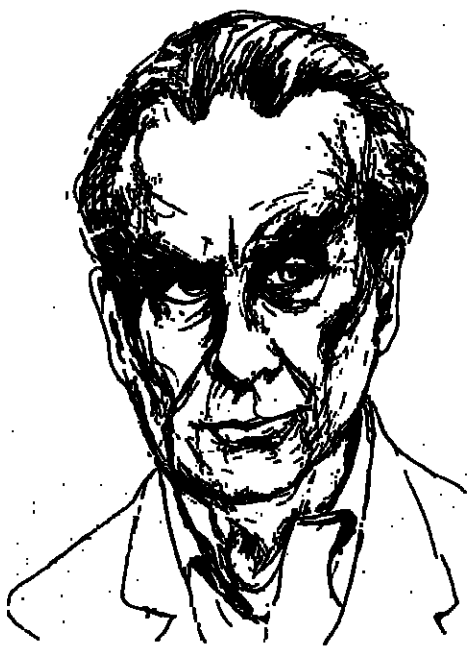
relations between KOR and its right-wing competitors, of the internal ideological schisms that led some of its founders to leave the group and espouse extreme and nationalistic positions, and of the growing hostility towards KOR shown by many rank-and-file members (and some leaders) of Solidarity, are markedly diffident, as if these subjects were simply too painful to probe.

One says this not to be churlish, but to illustrate the anomaly of an enlightened and humane group of people whose historic achievements are all the more remarkable for having occurred in an atmosphere increasingly inhospitable to some of its fundamental values. Before the emergence of Solidarity, KOR's efforts found a grateful echo in Polish society, despite that society's ingrained preference for what Lipski calls "the antique shop of Polish patriotic phraseology". By the summer and

autumn of 1981, however, as early optimism yielded to frustration, despair and fury, KOR found itself enmeshed in a two-pronged struggle: against the ruling élite (which detested KOR precisely because of its social democratic ethos), and against an increasing number of Solidarity supporters sympathetic to the goals and slogans of right-wing groups. At stake was not only KOR's influence on what was happening right then, but the legitimization of its historical role. Its decision to disband, announced at the Solidarity congress on September 28, 1981, was thus not only inevitable, but wise: it still could – and did – leave the scene with honour. Within three months most of its members – including Lipski – were seized by Jaruzelski's troops. Lipski's achievement in this book is that he sets the historical record straight and articulates without apology KOR's ideals; no one has a better right to do so.

honesty, he acknowledges that there is no way out of his dilemma that does not involve a return to the Christian religion. And how is such a return possible, given all that we know about ourselves, and about the tainted history of the Church which shaped our personalities, and which depicted for us, in its all too human colouring, the personality of the world?

Milosz asks the deepest questions: he is not at fault if he cannot answer them. Nevertheless, there may be more in the poetry of Mickiewicz than is contained in the explosive utterance of "Romantyzm". For the spiritual exile, it is surely *Pani Tadeusz* which gives the greatest message of hope. Mickiewicz wrote his extraordinary epic from a conviction that God had already made his mark. It is by our attempts to recuperate in feeling what is irrecoverable in fact that we most comprehensively assert our freedom. For it is then that we confront the contingency of the world, and see the meaning and the personality which elude the forward-looking lenses of the scientific rationalist. The spiritual solace which Mickiewicz sought in a vanished Lithuania is a fragile and elusive thing. But that which negates it is that which Milosz has already destroyed: the myth of "progress". Those philosophies (such as Marxism) which tell man that his meaning lies before him, that he is marching towards it, that he must only sever himself from the habit of obedience, are the true enemies of redemption. For they distract man's attention from the meaning which is uniquely perceivable: the meaning of the vanishing moment, which can be recorded only when it is irretrievably lost. If you can find God so easily in Poland, it is because, in that strange place, people are consoled by the public recollection of what is irretrievable. The Poles know in their hearts that "progress" is not just a myth, but a lie. And that is why it is especially tragic for Milosz, that he no longer lives among them.



someone who has lived through the institutionalized untruth of Communism. Milosz several times refers to Dostoevsky's awesome pronouncement: "If I must choose between truth and Christ, then I should choose Christ." But he recognizes that the choice is incoherent: Christ is chosen because he is the truth. At the same time there is no turning back from the scientific world-view, no "re-enchantment" that will cancel what we so painfully know. In Mickiewicz's poem the girl's beloved is dead and irrecoverable; her enchanted world is also a false world, a last desperate defence against the fact of bereavement. Is her case also ours? If we set aside the neutralizing lenses of science, and try to confront the personality of the universe, is this merely an exercise in self-deception, a refusal to acknowledge that God is dead?

Milosz gives no direct answer. Instead he leads us into the fascinating garden planted by his cousin Oscar, in which the rank flowers of mysticism clamber over each other in abundance, concealing the ground in which they are rooted. It is an impressive performance, and a seductive one. When Milosz concludes, with the words "reader, be tolerant of me, and of yourself, and of the singular aspirations of our human race", I am ready to obey. (Tolerance is strained only by the translator, who gives us W. H. Auden's version of "Romantyzm", in which just about everything significant is mistranslated, including the title.) Nevertheless, the elaborate invocations of Blake and Swedenborg are as unsatisfying to the reader as they seem to be to Milosz. With commendable

Igor Pomeranisev's collection of short stories, *Al'by serenady* (146pp. RR Press, 8a Rochester Terrace, London NW1 9JBN. £6) is the first book to be issued by a new Russian language publishing co-operative. "Short Stories" is perhaps misleading; although there are fragmentary fictions in all these pieces, they are far removed from the genre practised in Maupassant and Kipling. The author, who emigrated from the Soviet Union in 1978, has translated Beckett and Pinter, and his work shows a strong modernist interest in the process of writing as such. The first, and to my mind the best, of these pieces is entitled "Reading Faulkner"; it weaves together reflections on Faulkner's writing and on the poetry of Pasternak and others, fragments of a first-person narration with memories of places, moments and people from the narrator's past and pastiches of other styles. The worlds evoked throughout the book lie between dream and reality. The imaginative title piece, for instance, is told by an unidentified animal working in a weird animal bureaucracy. There are no obvious political, metaphysical or moral lessons to be drawn; what seems to matter is the wrestling – by writer and reader – with language.

Peter France

## Patience, cruelty and cunning

Paul Preston

RICARDO DE LA CIERVA

Francisco Franco: Biografía histórica. Six volumes, 300pp each. Madrid: Planeta. 8485753534

LUIS SUÁREZ FERNÁNDEZ  
Franco: La historia y sus documentos. Twenty volumes, 111pp each. Madrid: Urbin. 8475232817

JUAN PABLO FUSI  
Franco: Autoritarismo y poder personal. 283pp. Madrid: El País. 848645901X

When Franco died on November 20, 1975, there was every reason to suppose that we would quickly be inundated by biographies. Curiously, it has taken ten years for serious reconsideration to begin. Even so all is not as it seems. The uniform size and three-column format of the multi-volume works of Ricardo de la Cierva and Luis Suárez Fernández reflect their origins in serial publication of a kind normally reserved in this country for motorcycle maintenance and the Second World War. Both are re-workings of earlier books. La Cierva's *Francisco Franco: Un siglo de España* (TLS, November 1, 1974) was considered something of an "official" biography. At the time, he was Director General of Popular Culture and head of the Francoist censorship apparatus, and he made much of his contacts with Franco. The Caudillo's imprimatur is invoked in this new, much expanded and lavishly illustrated edition. Direct competition in terms of approval from the grave is mounted by Suárez Fernández. A medieval historian, and a fervent Francoist, he was selected by the Franco family to synthesize the large body of documentary material which they had deposited in the Fundación Nacional Francisco Franco in Madrid. The fruit of that enterprise was his eight-volume biography *Francisco Franco y su*

*tiempo* (1984). The present sumptuously produced version presents a slightly trimmed-down text together with an abundance of graphic material and documents.

Much is made by La Cierva of the fact that, despite constant rumours, Franco did not leave memoirs. The Caudillo is alleged to have said, "I have not written memoirs and I have no plans to do so. Too many people would come out badly." Accordingly, La Cierva insinuates, his volumes, submitted in manuscript to Franco himself and sparsely annotated by him, are as near as we will ever get to memoirs. Suárez Fernández lacks the outrageous flamboyance and volatility of the irrepressible La Cierva, opting for a tone of hushed respect rather than racy familiarity. Throughout his rambling narrative, he is open and undeviating in his admiration for his subject. He writes ploddingly and in the style of the 1940s "Crusade" historiography, seeing communist conspiracy at every turn. He also claims to present surrogate memoirs by virtue of reprinting numerous documents, including an unrevealing fragment of autobiography.

Juan Pablo Fusi does something altogether less ambitious and yet much further-reaching. He has produced a dense and dispassionate reappraisal of Franco's career, crisply written and cool where the others are verbose and partisan. A decade after his death, the major obstacle to serious assessment of Franco is curiously his greatest achievement, his survival across different historical epochs. Dr Fusi, in his concise and careful study, sets out to explain the apparently contradictory elements of Franco's career that arose precisely out of this fact. A cold-blooded military rebel in 1936 and a cruel dictator in the 1940s, Franco yet managed to avoid the fate of his German and Italian partners in crime. In the 1950s, he became a favoured ally of the United States and grudgingly permitted a process of economic modernization in the 1960s. Finally, without ever relaxing the machinery of police terror on which his régime was built, he was plausibly

presented as the father of his people in the 1970s. For his supporters, this gradual evolution absolved him from a fascist past which somehow diminished in importance the longer he lived beyond it. Time was Franco's greatest ally, but that is no excuse for La Cierva and Suárez permitting its passage to obscure the real nature of his rule. Equally, as Fusi points out, anti-Francoist assessments of the Caudillo have been flawed by their refusal to confront the social stability and economic change achieved under his régime or the consequent acceptance of the dictatorship by large segments of the population.

Franco's inscrutable pragmatism reached its apogee during the Civil War. His German allies condemned his strategy as over-cautious and uninspired. Understandably, as committed Francoists, La Cierva and Suárez Fernández regard him as a very great military strategist. What is more curious is that Fusi refers to his generalship on four separate occasions as "brilliant". This is hard to swallow as a military rather than a political judgment. Apart from their strategic deficiencies, which were the despair of the German advisers, the excessive caution, the obsession with logistics, the refusal to cede any territory no matter what the cost, Franco's military decisions were always subordinate to long-term political considerations. It was possible for him to have won the war earlier but he had other priorities. He conducted a slow war of attrition and thereby facilitated a thoroughgoing purge of his republican enemies from the rearguard. He used a slow campaign to establish political supremacy over more flamboyant rivals.

The most flagrant example was in the autumn of 1936, when his armies were poised to sweep into Madrid. Vital breathing-space was given to the beleaguered capital, time for arrival of the International Brigades and Soviet equipment, when he paused in order to relieve the besieged Nationalists trapped in the Alcázar of Toledo. By this great symbolic act, he captured for his own use the most potent myth

of the Nationalist side and paved the way a few days later to being made Commander-in-Chief of the Nationalist Armies, Head of Government and Head of State.

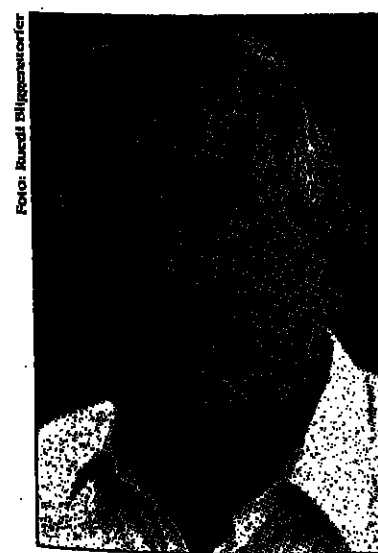
His military style, more appropriate to a minor colonial war, reflected both his early experiences in Spanish Morocco as a column commander and a deep-seated contempt for the Spanish working class. Indeed, the subsequent stability of the post-war régime was built upon the repressive apparatus set up in the early 1940s with help from the Gestapo. It turned the daily lives of his opponents into a spiral of denunciations, arrests, tortures and firing squads. The scale of repression – with estimates of prisoners in labour camps and jails ranging from 200,000 to 1 million and over 200,000 executions – served as a lesson for decades. Only an occasional reminder, like the execution of the communist Julian Grimau in 1963, was necessary thereafter. This is an aspect of the régime discussed seriously by Fusi, but dismissed in passing by La Cierva and Suárez Fernández. Fusi uses Franco's visceral anti-communism to explain much, from his initial hatred of the Popular Front, which he saw as a communist intrigue, to his bizarre plans for the survival of his régime after his death.

A more subtle form of repression, not discussed by any of Franco's biographers, was corruption. Post-war hunger and poverty spawned a black market (the *estraperlo*) and a prostitution network. Despite a reputation for stifling personal puritanism, he never took action against corruption. Spectacular fortunes were made by some of Franco's henchmen. Malpractices – ranging from the Argentinian wheat, sent in 1949 to relieve Spain's hunger and sold abroad before it arrived, to the huge Matean machinery export swindle of 1969 – were benevolently overlooked by the Caudillo. Franco was fortunate. The misdeeds of the 1940s were committed while the world's media were involved elsewhere; those of the 1950s when the Cold War justified everything. Such good fortune reflected a sinuous ability to

S. Fischer's Centenary

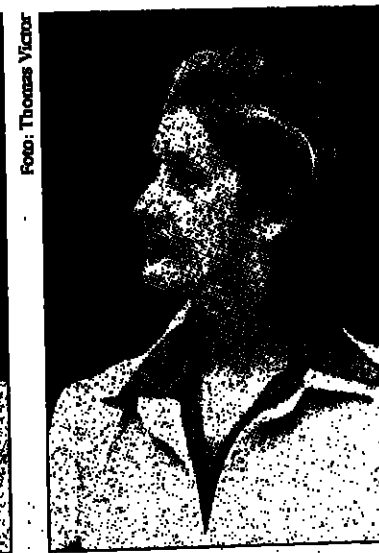
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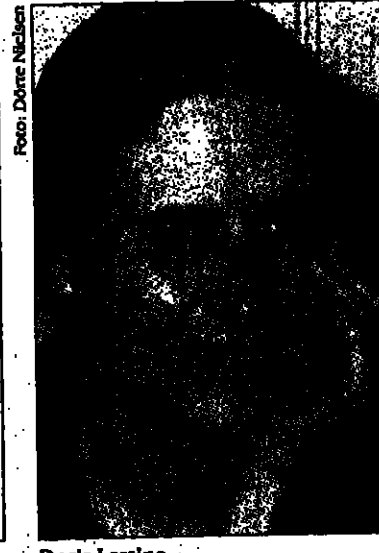
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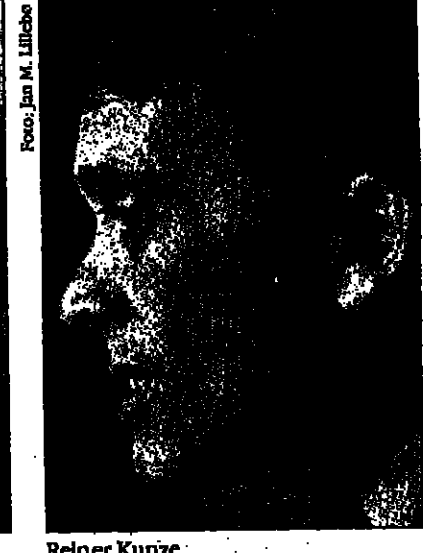
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Inquiries from authors are welcome.

adjust to the international context. This was amply demonstrated during the Second World War, and all three authors discuss at length the process whereby Spain was kept out of the hostilities. As an openly declared enemy of liberal democracy and bolshevism, there was no doubt where Franco's sympathies lay when Hitler unleashed a war to exterminate both. At the historic meeting between Führer and Caudillo at Hendaye on October 23, 1940, only Hitler's reluctance to commit resources to overcoming Spain's economic exhaustion stood in the way of Franco's joining the Axis war effort. In other words, Spain was saved from world war not, as Suárez Fernández would have us believe, by Franco's genius but because, as Fusi demonstrates, his price was too high.

The Soviet Union's entry into the war ultimately saved Franco from the consequences of his fascist aspirations. His propaganda began to deride the Soviet Union as "the common enemy". The sending of the Blue Division of Falangist fanatics to fight in Russia, an attempt to repay the "debt of blood" contracted with "our comrades of the Axis" during the Civil War, was reinterpreted as part of a continuing crusade against communism and struck a chord among the Allies. Once Hitler was defeated, the régime's fascist trappings were dropped and Franco redefined his objectives as "order, unity and just to hang on". Filtration with the Axis received the merely token punishment of exclusion from the United Nations. After Churchill's iron curtain speech at Fulton, it was all plain sailing. The Cold War converted Franco into "the Sentinel of the West". By September 1950, he was happily accepting US bases in return for credits and military aid. Two years later, Spain had been accepted into the United Nations and Franco declared "I have finally won the Civil War".

No area is more revealing of the essential Franco than his dealings with the left. Franco treated the opposition with an extraordinary mixture of brutality, luck and cold skill. There was brutality in the repression; more than an element of luck in finding the communists and the other leftist forces bitterly divided among themselves; and above all the skill to know when and how to drive wedges between his opponents. A vivid example of this was the way in which he made a private agreement over the

succession with Don Juan, the heir to the throne, in the late 1940s and so destroyed socialist-monarchist negotiations just when it seemed that they might bear fruit. Even earlier, the manipulated referendum of July 1947 had undermined the idea that the monarchists, the socialists or even the communists could muster equivalent popular support. All three authors stress the paternalistic elements in Franco's rule as the basis of the real popularity which he began to enjoy during the 1950s. However, only Fusi provides a really convincing account of how the dictator's well-laid plans for the future resulted in his nightmare come true, the re-establishment of democracy and the legalization of political parties, including the communists. La Cierva is outrageous at this point. He describes the Francoist army officers who consistently tried to overthrow democracy as "the guarantors of the transition" and ends with an astonishing flourish. "The historian", as he endearingly refers to himself, "sincerely thinks that if, God willing, democracy is definitively consolidated in Spain, Franco will have been right, righter than ever in his life."

What is to be made of Franco's extraordinary mixture of duplicity, detachment and implacability? A curious feature of the last ten years in Spain has been the success of books written by members of the Caudillo's entourage, from his ADC General Franco Salgado-Araujo to his family doctor. They have collectively, and perhaps inadvertently, portrayed a petty-minded mediocrity. This rings true only in part. His simplicity and his peasant cunning certainly helped in the masterly cabinet reshuffles which kept the various Francoist factions dependent on him. No one as doltily simple as the Franco of some recent publications stays in power for so long. Nor is it true that he had no ideas at all. In early life, obsessions with communism and freemasonry inspired him to pseudonymous flights of erudition. In power, however, he rarely read books or newspapers and had no interest in "culture". He took up painting because Churchill did and golf to emulate President Eisenhower. His obsessions were hunting and fishing trips on which shady deals were often struck by his collaborators. His pleasures were films, shown in his private viewing-room, and television. He did the football pools and even won a substantial sum in

1969, a stroke of "good fortune" which no doubt convinced him of the egalitarian nature of his régime.

However, what sometimes appeared to be mediocrity concealed his most powerful weapon, what the Spaniards call *dejar hacer*, or turning a blind eye. One ex-Foreign Minister commented in this respect: "to be a minister of Franco is to be a little king who does whatever he feels like without restraint from the Caudillo". The ultimate source of his power lay in astutely playing off the *familias*, or power groups, of the coalition which won the Civil War. His devious insouciance enveloped them in Byzantine competitions for the spoils of power. The process whereby he appointed and discarded ministers with a ruthless dispassion and thus maintained his position as the grand arbiter of the *familias* is ably discussed by all three biographers, but most sharply by Fusi.

Neither originality nor mediocrity were the hallmarks of Franco, but rather patience, cruelty and cunning. Fusi produces a convincing character study of the cold, reserved, slow-moving Franco and of that indefinable quality, so akin to good luck, his ability simply to survive by waiting for the wind to change. "magisterial inertia". Neither La Cierva nor Suárez Fernández goes beyond an implicit acceptance of his genius and even-handed statesmanship. Even in the years of the "economic miracle", when he had allegedly "mellowed", Franco remained ready to unleash savage repression. Appeals from the Pope and many heads of state were unable to prevent the execution of Grimaud in 1963. Striking workers were still being shot and leftists executed in the turbulent 1970s as he tried to ensure the survival of his dictatorship after his death. Fusi points out that Franco simply did not understand the complexities of industrialized society. He perceived strikes and student demonstrations as the work of foreign agitators and reacted accordingly. The harsh face of the patriarch is conveniently forgotten by both La Cierva and Suárez Fernández, although their view from the inside, if used with caution, is not without its insights. Added to the profusion of photographs, maps, posters and documents in which their biographies abound, it makes them, in their very different ways, almost as indispensable as Fusi.

## Catalan sophistications

I. A. A. Thompson

**JAMES S. AMELANG**  
*Honored Citizens of Barcelona: Patrician culture and class relations, 1490-1714*  
 259pp. Guildford: Princeton University Press. £21.50.  
 0 691 05461 4

Early-modern Barcelona has been dubbed "the Sleeping Beauty of the Mediterranean". Over the two centuries from 1500 the city changed little and hardly grew. Economic sluggishness and institutional stability gave local society a strong sense of continuity. However, one fundamental change did take place. Alterations in the social composition, professional activities and public identity of the city's governing élite contributed, James S. Amelang argues, to "the most significant transformation in the lengthy history of the Catalan ruling class prior to the industrial era". It is the successful recomposition of Barcelona's élite and the construction of a new ideological basis for ruling-class hegemony that is the subject of this, the first of a promised three-part study of "culture" in modern Catalonia.

An oligarchy of about one hundred "honored citizens" (*ciudadanos honrados*) emerged from the reforms of 1490-1510, dominating the government of Barcelona and enjoying the privileges of nobility. Already distanced from the merchant community by "a skilful transposition to the urban sphere of the values and modes of behavior of the feudal aristocracy", it is Amelang's thesis that the early-modern period saw this civic oligarchy and Catalonia's established nobility fused into a unified urban patriciate as, on the one hand, the gentry and the nobles were admitted into municipal gov-

ernment and, on the other, the citizens were accepted as integral members of the nobility. That "pat" was cemented by the creation of a distinctive, élite culture based on liberal education, sophistication and civility as essential characteristics of all members of the upper class. Amelang writes: "Distinctions between acquired or inherited virtue played a far lesser role in defining the new, united ruling class of the early modern period than did the binding tie of shared knowledge."

The analysis is conducted, therefore, on two planes, one sociological, the other cultural. Three chapters trace social mobility through the "honored citizenship", the rise of doctors and jurists (the *gaudins*), and the movement of the nobility into the city and into the law. A further four chapters examine the institutions which propagated and the modes of behaviour which gave expression to élite values, together with shifts in the "social vocabulary" and meaning of culture from an individual and inherited quality to an acquired, group ideal. All this is studied with ingenuity and sensitivity from evidence drawn from an impressive range of cultural forms, the language of pamphlets, diaries, carnival poems, funeral orations, the curricula of colleges, the disputations of academies, the anthropology of public festivals, even the architecture of the balcony.

The problem is that the two planes of analysis never entirely come together. It is only to be expected that the educated would propound the nobility of education, but cultural nobility was only one of various theoretical dimensions of nobility; and what we need to know is how far the nobility as a whole had abandoned alternative criteria. Catalan petitioners for the "privilege of nobility" (for example) put considerable emphasis on their levels of wealth and income. What complicated the question is that

the Catalan nobility was very much larger in 1700 than in 1500, inflated by well over 800 royal creations, many of them, no doubt, ex-"honored citizens" and *gaudins*. Have we a fusion of élites, or a swamping of traditional values? A much more comprehensive sociological analysis of "culture" is needed than has presumably been possible.

*Honored Citizens of Barcelona* is an original contribution to the history of early-modern élite culture and mobility which will have a wide appeal, not least for its comparative approach. One comparison not pursued, but deserving attention, is that with Castile, if only because the Castilian experience, where the inflation of honours actually reinforced traditional values of blood and lineage in the seventeenth century, seems to have been so different from that of Catalonia. Professor Amelang's Barcelona, however, looks out across to the Mediterranean and the Italian city republics, and has its back turned on Castile - a sign of the times, perhaps, in Catalan historiography.

*Voices From The Spanish Civil War: Personal recollections of Scottish Volunteers in Republican Spain 1936-39*, edited by Ian MacDougall (369pp. Edinburgh: Polygon. Paperback. £9.95. 0 948275 19 7), contains oral accounts by twenty Scottish members of the International Brigade who supported the Republican cause.

*Cockburn in Spain: Despatches from the Spanish Civil War*, edited by James Pettifer (208pp. Lawrence and Wishart. Paperback. £4.95. 0 85315 668 9), contains a selection of reports written from the front by Claud Cockburn. Most of the despatches were published in the Communist *Daily Worker*, and others in Cockburn's own news-sheet, *The Week*. Also included are extracts from his book, *Barrage in Spain*.

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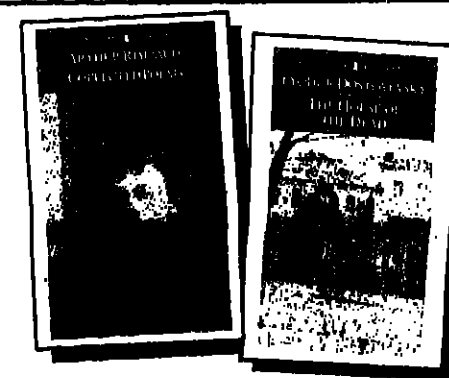
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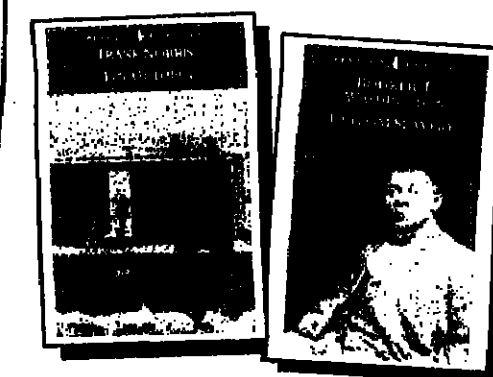
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Spain is like



# A champion of justice

Franco Venturi

**CESARE BECCARIA**  
Complete Works: Volumes One and Two  
Edited by Luigi Firpo, Gianni Francioni and Gianmarco Gaspari.  
721pp. and 549pp. Milan: Mediobanca.  
Available only to libraries and cultural associations.

Italians are currently preoccupied with the literary heritage that has gradually accumulated in the libraries, the archives and the schools. Should we preserve it, refurbish it or completely restore it? The edition of a text is a painstaking attempt to return to the origins, and at the same time to trace the path which the text has followed on its way to us. The national edition of the works of Cesare Beccaria, of which two volumes, for the present, have been published, is a living example of this desire to get back to the original text and at the same time to understand its historical path.

The political motivation behind this national edition is obvious, dedicated as it is to the Milanese lawyer Adolfo Tino, an active member of the Resistance and one of the founders of the *Partito d'Azione*. The encouragement to carry it out came from Mediobanca, of which Tino was president for two decades, and which was subsequently directed by Enrico Cuccia, the patron of this edition. It has been edited by Luigi Firpo, who has given us so many exemplary editions of Italian political thought, from Campanella onwards. And the editor has found two excellent young collaborators, Gianni Francioni and Gianmarco Gaspari, who could hardly better personify the scrupulous dedication which characterizes this young generation of philologists, and their intense, almost tortured desire to get to the roots of the texts they study, without lapsing, as a result, into those forms of hyper-restoration to which so many buildings and works of literature have been subjected in recent years.

The problems that Firpo and his collaborators have had to face have been manifold. In Beccaria genius and uncertainty, lucidity and listlessness were united in unexpected, paradoxical forms. The intellectual courage which made him the champion of the reform of justice in the century of the Enlightenment coexisted in him with a profound passivity, an unconquerable form of aboulia which always held him back from participating in the everyday battle in defence of his own ideas. There was a Rousseauesque streak in his temperament, which right from the very beginning prevented him from playing a role of his own among the Parisian philosophers, from responding to invitations, urgings and eulogies which came to him from all over Europe. Voltaire could not even entice him to Ferney. As for Catherine II, when she was waiting for him to come to her side in St Petersburg, Beccaria was happy to follow the advice of D'Alembert, who told him to stay in Milan, enjoying from afar the admiration of the Empress, whom it was undoubtedly better, he added, to have as a lover

than as a wife. So great was this passivity that it led Beccaria to accept and indeed to praise the translation which Morellet had made of his book *Dei delitti e delle pene*, despite the fact that the translation modified, if not the letter, then certainly the spirit and the structure of the original.

What Beccaria had written was not a treatise on penal law but an expression of the rebellion and protest of an extremely sensitive and clear-thinking individual against the injustice, cruelty and inequality of the world around him. Morellet's attempt to transform it, in his own definition, into a *Traité* in the classical French spirit, had an effect of exceptional historical importance, impressing on the whole of Europe the need for a reform of its penal codes. It was through Morellet's translation, published in 1766, that *Dei delitti e delle pene* came to the knowledge of sovereigns and magistrates, of monarchies and republics. Diderot's protest against this translation remained unpublished. Beccaria himself, far from defending his own text, accepted that of the Parisian philosopher, which soon became the vulgarate, and was reprinted and translated in London and Leipzig, Madrid and Venice.

And yet the Italian text, the original words that Beccaria had written, continued to shine with a special light of their own. And it is this light that the edition published by Gianni Francioni in the first volume of these *Opere* restores to us with perfect clarity. Here we are no longer in the halls of the eighteenth-century courts or in the courtrooms of the tribunals of the *ancien régime*. We find ourselves back in the little room in Pietro Verri's house in Milan, during the winter of 1763-4, beside the earthenware stove which has been preserved to this day, and in the company of the few friends who formed what was at that time polemically named the Accademia dei Pugni (the "Academy of Fistcliffs").

Here the most topical and burning issues of the day were being discussed at a decisive moment in the European Enlightenment, when the great enterprise of the *Encyclopédie* was drawing near to its conclusion, which it was to reach in 1765, when in Paris new ideas and problems were being searched for in Nicolas-Antoine Boulanger, in Helvétius and in the new physiocracy, when Scotland was beginning to establish itself as one of the fundamental centres of modern economics and historiography, and when the most important political text of that decade, Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Contrat Social*, had only just been published (a pirated edition of this work was produced around 1764 by the Livorno bookseller who was to publish *Dei delitti e delle pene*). From this small world, composed, with the exception of one clergyman, entirely of nobles and patricians, was born the most lively Italian periodical of the eighteenth century, *Il Caffè*.

A painting, which has been preserved for two centuries by the heirs of Pietro Verri, shows us the editors of the periodical reading and discussing with one another. The most isolated and solitary figure is Beccaria, totally

absorbed in the thoughts aroused in him by the book he is reading and yet, we feel, intimately linked with the other young gentlemen of the Accademia dei Pugni. He was twenty-five years old, and had only recently emerged from an education which he himself described as "fanatical", in other words, clerical and traditional.

He had already been in conflict with his family and with the Milanese authorities on the occasion of his wedding. Among his friends he had found a refuge from the apprehensions, fears and uncertainties which beset him. In vain did he proclaim himself an Epicurean. His whole mind was engaged in the search for a truth which could give him that certainty which at every moment he felt elude him; a truth which might have been scientific (ever since boyhood he had been known as *Newtonino* - "little Newton" - because of the mathematical abilities which made him, as Schumpeter has said, one of the precursors of modern economic analysis); a truth which he sought in philosophy, meditating on the works of Helvétius. But his vocation lay elsewhere: it lay in taking upon his own shoulders the crushing burden, accumulated over the centuries, of judicial cruelties, prisons, torture and capital punishment, to replace it with a radically reformed penal system, based on social calculation and individual reason. Bentham and Condorcet would be the heirs and continuers of Beccaria's work. The increasingly clear distinction between sin and crime would eventually modify the legal codes of the whole of Europe. Barely twenty years were to pass before in Tuscany the archduke Peter Leopold was to publish, in 1787, the first legislation which completely abolished torture and the death penalty.

Beccaria's pamphlet was pregnant with this future, laden with the developments which were to be born from it in the following decades. His style corresponded perfectly with the task that he had entrusted to his own work. It is a youthful style, improvised, born from the rejection of every model. He certainly admired the encyclopaedists, but when he spoke of torture, the death penalty, and guarantees for the accused, he put into his words something that they had not expressed, that "tremor" which, he used to say, could not fail to take hold of the mind of anyone called to pass judgment on his equals. The inner rhythm of the work, the very aspect of it which was altered by Morellet, was anything but classical. As Diderot noted, in these pages "calm suddenly follows upon fury and fury upon calm, without there being any movement to prepare for or conceal these moral dissonances".

In every country the debate was animated. As far as Britain is concerned, there is little to add to the magisterial exposition by Leon Radzinowicz. Beccaria's words touched the deepest fibres of the minds of men like Sylvester Douglas, Baron Glenelgue, William Blackstone, Samuel Romilly and Jeremy Bentham. Discussions on the subject of *Dei delitti e delle pene* proliferated (the most uncompromising objections came from the painter Allan Ramsay). In the case of other countries, like Spain, the revived interest of recent years in characters such as Campomanes and Floridablanca now makes it easier to follow the routes by which Beccaria's thought penetrated into a difficult and passionate milieu. In Greece, under Turkish domination, the translation by Coray, the most level-headed and sophisticated patriot in the period of transition from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century, marked a particularly significant stage. And thus we could go on, following, even into the most unexpected corners, the reflections of Beccaria's mind and thought. In Italy the reception was especially variegated, modelling itself on the different local situations. In Venice he was insulted with a term which was then used for the first time. He was called a *socialista*, because of his egalitarianism and his Rousseauesque conception of human society. In Naples not even such a man as Filangieri could go as far as accepting legislation which entirely abolished the death penalty. In Rome *Dei delitti e delle pene* was put on the Index. The Swissellenberg, however, said that Beccaria was redeeming all the wrongs and misdeeds which the papacy had heaped upon Italy over the centuries. In Milan Beccaria met with objects and enemies, but also solid support, and in the end he became identified with the

most authentic character of local culture. His grandson Alessandro Manzoni would later be seen as a nineteenth-century reincarnation of him.

Against this international and cosmopolitan background we can achieve a better understanding of that reforming energy which never ceased to make itself felt from the moment when *Dei delitti e delle pene* was published, in July 1764, anonymously, by Auber in Livorno. The documentation is in the first volume of the *Opere*, which is entirely dedicated to Beccaria's *capolavoro*. The introductions, the notes and the appendices constitute a veritable encyclopaedia of the Italian Enlightenment in its springtime, in the 1760s and 1770s. Luigi Firpo has provided us with a detailed description of the Italian editions of *Dei delitti e delle pene*, an absolute forest of small bookshelves and distributors over the course of two centuries, from Auber who, after the publication of Beccaria's book, soon became the editor of one of the two Tuscan republications of Diderot and D'Alembert's *Encyclopédie*, to the most recent editions, the most moving of which, for a present-day Italian, is the one edited by Piero Calamandrei, with the tragic dates 1943-4, one of the first signs of the return to civilization and liberty after the liberation of Florence.

The illustrations, chosen according to the same strictly documentary criterion which inspires the whole of this edition, are eloquent, from the 1766 portrait of Beccaria, already showing the signs of premature corpulence, to the celebrated frontispiece which he himself conceived specially for the first edition of *Dei delitti e delle pene*, where we see Justice, in the person of Minerva, dismissing in disgust an executioner who offers her some chopped-off heads, while she smiles, on the other hand, at the tools to be used by the convicts who will redeem through their own manual labour the harm which they have done to society.

If the first volume is a voyage of discovery in Beccaria's most celebrated work, in the second we are ourselves seized anew, two centuries later, by the doubts and uncertainties which seemed to take hold of the author as soon as his early youth had faded. The articles inserted in *Il Caffè* are a genuine pleasure to read, so subtle are they, so intelligent and so perceptive. Then follow the attempts which Beccaria made to be as original and profound as he had shown himself in the field of the penal code when venturing now into the vast fields of literary theory and the nascent sociology. Thus we find republished the fragmentary writings that he laboriously worked away at in the hope of arriving at a complete reinterpretation of human society; a project which was simultaneously being carried out by Lord Kames and which was finally to issue, in 1776, in Adam Smith's masterpiece. Beccaria was once again putting himself at the centre of the European Enlightenment. But how could a young man still in his twenties write a second *Dei delitti e delle pene*? The editors of this volume have demonstrated, nevertheless, that in the case of a writer like Beccaria it is right and important to follow even the attempts that came to a dead end, which weighed on his heart for years like a rebuke, but which for us are so many proofs of the vitality of what Voltaire at that time called the "school of Milan".

In political economy Beccaria was to find an outlet for his energies. He was to become a professor of this science, in Milan, and one of the very first in Italy. He himself never published the text of his lectures, and it is known to us only through the edition published almost two centuries ago, by Custodi, which is in urgent need of refurbishing, of restoration. And this is what the editors of the *Opere* promise us, together with not only the correspondence but also the immense mass of writings produced by Beccaria, when he became for two decades, from the beginning of the 1770s, a shrewd and intelligent participant in the movement for administrative and economic reform in the age of Maria Teresa, and Joseph II. In this case there will have to be a veritable excavation in the archives of Lombardy and Vienna. All scholars of the eighteenth century await its results with interest. It will not be a work of hyper-restoration, but of indispensable reinforcement of our knowledge of an important period in Italian and European thought.

# Parisian dissonances

Benedetta Craveri

GIOVANNI MACCHIA  
*Le rovine di Parigi*  
417pp. Milan: Mondadori. L30.000.

In 1934, shortly after he had been appointed Professor of English Literature at the University of Rome, Mario Praz examined a twenty-year-old student who presented his graduate thesis on Baudelaire as critic. That student's name was Giovanni Macchia, and his thesis was to become the first in his series of important contributions to Baudelaire criticism. Fifty years later, he was to draw a fine portrait of the author of *La carne, la morte, il diavolo*, a milestone in the understanding of Praz - whom Edmund Wilson called "the genie of via Giulia".

The friendship between Praz and Macchia was not merely founded on circumstance (they were colleagues at the same university for decades and became respectively the most eminent Italian scholars of English and French literature); there were also more basic affinities between them. Both went far beyond the

limits of their own academic disciplines, to explore other literatures. In Macchia's words, they were lured by the "dream" of "abolishing, in literary criticism, all distinctions between past and present, between the literature which is becoming and that which has already been made" (*Il mito di Parigi*, 1965). Both, though in varying degrees, were to extend their studies into the history of art and of taste (Macchia, for instance, wrote the entry on Watteau for the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, creating what became two monuments of learning and intelligence: Praz's enthusiasm for collecting produced *La casa della vita*, a remarkable museum of the Empire style, and Macchia created a splendid library).

"The ceaseless exploration of the relations between one book and another, one form and another", which has been remarked on in Praz, is also found in Macchia's work and is one of the most fascinating elements in *Le rovine di Parigi*. The book contains fifty essays, written between 1966 and 1984, on French subjects ranging from Montaigne to Proust; the first forty-one essays concentrate on an idea of literature as destruction, and prepare us for the nine final essays which give the book its title. These deal with the visionary nightmare of the

destruction of Paris that poets and writers experienced from the end of the eighteenth century to the reign of Napoleon III. They also deal with the disembowling of the city in the urban changes of the nineteenth century, as well as with the reflection of these events in the poetic imagination.

As a critic, Macchia refuses to be constrained by rules of interpretation. With Montaigne's *Essais* as his inspiration, he says that "a book is not constructed, it becomes. And we should not be afraid of disorder." But there is nothing unintentional about his meandering ways; they answer to a basic need in his critical temperament, and stem from his love of discovery and intellectual adventure, from his suspicion of formulas and his dislike of *idées reçues*. Despite his enthusiasm for French literature he in no way idealizes it; on the contrary, his relationship with it is strongly critical. He adheres to the idea that there are two different strains in French culture, the courtly, Cartesian element of classicism, symbolized by Versailles, and the anarchic, restless and vital element that, from the Middle Ages, with Villon and Rabelais, has lived in the heart of Paris. It is clear that Macchia prefers the dissonances of Paris to the triumphal march of Versailles, and

in the Grand Siècle he prefers to study the crises, interpret the silence ("Il silenzio di Mollière", 1975), emphasize the pessimism ("I moralisti classici", 1961), and reveal a vein of disaffection and unreality ("Saggi italiani", 1983). But the shadows and contrasts which he throws on the dazzling evocation of classicism "seek not to make France poorer, but to enrich her, to reveal what has long been misrepresented and forgotten" ("Paradiso de la ragione", 1960).

Each of the characters portrayed in *Le rovine di Parigi* is caught obliquely, through some attitude, expression or revealing, unforgettable detail. Threads of association and reference span great distances, and these connections are made through the subjects and issues which appear in all of Macchia's criticism: the "processif" movement of French literature, which continually denies itself the need to "find new forms of expression, as happened in the theatre (Pirandello)", melancholy, dissimulation, journeys, real or imaginary illness, the myth of revolution and catastrophe of Paris and its ruins. A single issue none the less links all the characters considered by Macchia, and is, I feel, the nub and inspiration of the book: this is the problem of writing.

From Montaigne, who found the reason for his life in books, from Cardinal de Retz, to whom writing his own memoirs was a way of conquering history; from Rousseau, "who gives an infinite extension to literature", to Chamfort who teaches that "a writer's silence does not mean not writing"; from Victor Hugo's faith in the omnipotence of the word to Jules Renard's modern writer as parasite, *Le rovine di Parigi* is a critic's ardent search through the thousand faces of writing. At the same time it is the indirect autobiography of a writer who endlessly considers his choices. As Italo Calvino wrote, "Macchia's great gift is that he is the clearest and most balanced of critics, and at the same time expresses the whole of himself through his learning and the network of relationships established between texts."

# Grievances in Eden

David Coward

JACQUES CASANOVA DE SEINGALT  
*Icosameron*: or The story of Edward and Elizabeth  
Edited and translated by Rachel Zurer  
260pp. Jenna Press, 37 W 8th St, New York, NY 10011. \$17.95.  
0941752 02 X

An acre of Middlesex, said Macaulay, is far better than a principality in Utopia. Casanova, who was as immodest as he was naive, wanted both. With the *Icosameron*, a vast, rambling imaginary voyage of a novel, he hoped to dazzle Europe and at last achieve the financial independence which a mixture of human and cosmic perversity had always denied him. He wrote five drafts in as many years, switched from Italian to French in order to reach a wider public, but found subscribers reluctant to buy his book when it was published in Prague in 1788. The cost of publication wiped him out - again - but with the resilience which is part of his charm, he soldiered on. He discoursed on astral physics and the squaring of the cube, but convinced no one. Doomed to remain at Dux in Bohemia, where he was paid 80 guineas a year to act as Count Waldstein's librarian, he collapsed slowly, like a gaily painted *montgolfière* with a slow puncture, until his death in 1798.

Casanova's greatest artistic achievement was his life. His autobiography is both true and false in proportions now difficult to define, but he remains eternally fascinating, as the best documented case of Don Juanism. His utopian novel, on the other hand, with only imagination to recommend it, merely adds a chapter to the history of the extravagance of the human mind.

In 1533, Edward and Elizabeth are lost at sea. In 1615, they turn up, looking not a day older, with an account of their adventures in the Protocosmos, a world inside our globe, where time is measured differently. In a long commentary on Genesis, Casanova demonstrates that the Protocosmos is none other than the Garden of Eden. It is always midday and its tiny inhabitants, called Megamiries, live on perfumes and liquids and use a language made up of vowels which are "heard" through the skin. We learn about horseless carriages, fountain-pens and helicopter horses, as we would expect of an author who classed himself as "a Christian fortified by philosophy". Thus far, the *Icosameron* is a jolly romp sired by Swift out of Cyranos.

But since Utopia is never much more than the sum of the amended dissatisfactions of the utopian, Paradise soon loses its bloom. In its geometrically neat fiefs exist inequalities, taxes, punishments and corruption. Theologians maintain the population in superstitious thrall. Doctors and surgeons guard their rights

jealously. Courtiers plot and intrigue. Gondolas may be noticeable by their absence, but Paradise steadily turns into a place not unlike the Venice from which Casanova had been ejected. Swift's satire still smites the exalted because it assumes that the exercise of all power is absurd; Casanova's is parochial: the airing of personal grievances.

It is no surprise, therefore, to find Edward turning into an omniscient version of his creator. He reinvents printing and gunpowder and, thus equipped with a means of both communicating and enforcing his ideas such as was permitted only to the kings of Europe, he becomes not merely a philosopher-king but a God who sets about repopulating the Garden in his own image.

Elizabeth's role, of course, is to provide the progeny. Casanova enjoys explaining that her position as sister-wife has biblical precedent: the children of Adam and Eve clearly multiplied incestuously. In this land where nature's laws are stable, Elizabeth gives birth to twins each New Year's day for four decades. A careful count is kept of the offspring, who eventually number four million. Then when all the serpents have been shot and "la sainte philosophie" has been brought to Eden, Edward, while seeking a vein of red gold (for a friend, of course), blows himself and Elizabeth back into our world, where they tell their adventures over twenty days.

As they speak, Casanova prompts them with lectures on God, politics, medicine and mathematics, which Rachel Zurer has judiciously abridged or cut. Her version, which is exceptionally well translated, reduces the garulous original to about half without significant loss, and is remarkably successful in revealing that beneath the episodic plot and the endless verbiage lies a chronicle of impotence. On the personal level, Edward's scientific and entrepreneurial skills clearly make him as rich and influential in this imagined world as Casanova was poor and unheard in reality. But on the historico-cultural level, the thrusting mix of Cyranos, Swift, Defoe, Pullock and other earl-

ier, travellers gives way to a more desperate utopianism, that of Restif and Sade who, less confident that the world was capable of rational change, chose the private world of their fantasies.

It is said that the iron cross on Casanova's tomb rusted through and fell into the grass, where it continued to snatch at the skirts of passing girls. The exuberant *Icosameron* may not reach beyond the grave in such triumph, but it offers both a fascinating glimpse of the limits of eighteenth-century rationalism and a touchingly human self-portrait of a fallible but endlessly engaging *picaresque* who never did quite get that acre of Middlesex.

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## Pratesi at work

Stuart Woolf

ELENA FASANO GUARINI (Editor)  
Prato: Storia di una città  
Volume Two, Un microcosmo in movimento  
(1494-1815)  
927pp. Florence: Comune di Prato/L'E  
Monnier. L187,000.

Urban history, once the preserve of antiquaries and local scholars, is experiencing a notable revival in Italy, appropriately enough, in a country "of the hundred cities" whose architectural and artistic legacy constitutes the mainstay of tourism. For a sense of civic identity and pride seems to have survived massive movements of population (or to have emerged as a response to them?) to a greater extent than in England or France. The new wave of urban histories was initiated in the 1950s with a sixteen-volume history of Milan sponsored by the prestigious Treccani Foundation (responsible for the *Enciclopedia Italiana*); an example soon followed by other historic cities of the Po plain such as Bergamo and Brescia, then by Naples, and in recent years by small towns in central Italy, such as Montecatini, Colle Salvetti and now Prato. Indeed urban history, which is a mix of political-social and architectural history, has gained a sufficiently wide public in Italy to justify two series of histories produced by the commercial publisher Laterza, alongside two specialized academic reviews, *Storia Urbana* and *Storia della città*.

These new histories have generally been the work of professional historians, sponsored by the municipalities in question, but the results have not always lived up to legitimate expectations: that the approach will be both modern and broad. The city of Prato has now shown, however, how successful such patronage can be, for the present volume sets a new standard in the writing of Italian urban history. Prato is a very special city in terms of its history, its booming textile-based economy and its cultural attitudes. The homeland of Francesco di Marco Datini, Iris Origo's "Merchant of Prato", it established itself in the 1960s as an international forum for economic historians under the leadership of Fernand Braudel; and to Braudel the city authorities turned to preside over what will be a four-volume history.

The present volume, the first to appear, bears the imprint of *Annales*. Narrative history is ignored, as the history of Prato is analysed and dissected to reveal structural changes over

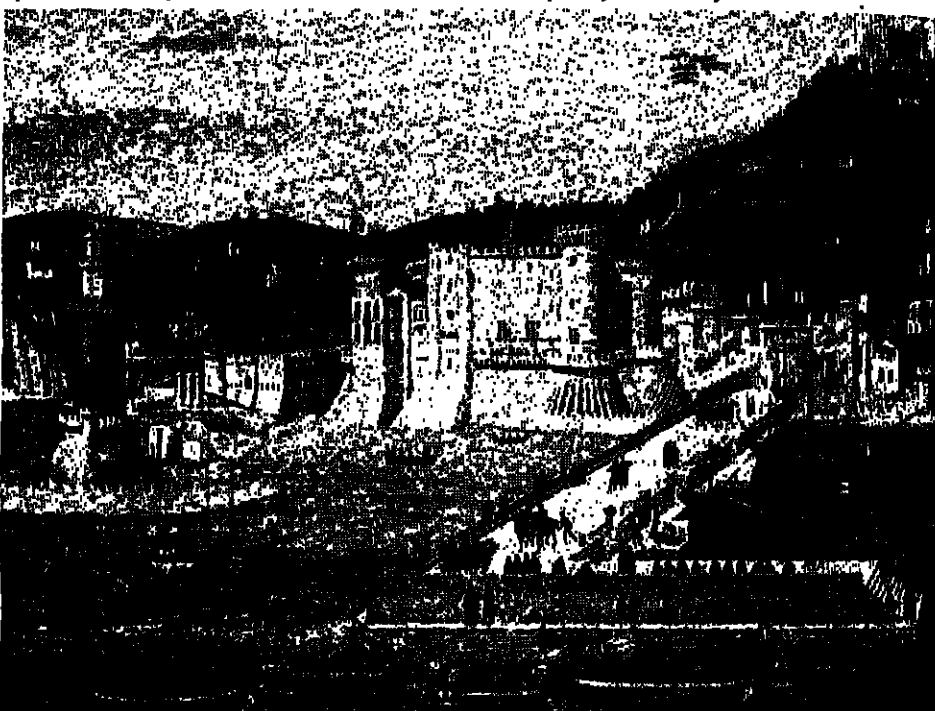
the *longue durée*, often extending beyond the three centuries of the title. The fourteen contributions fall recognizably into the tripartite *Annales* formula of economy, society and civilization. Land, population, agriculture and industry are covered first; then come forms of government, the ruling class, poverty and charity; and next the Church, the places and forms of public and private life, culture, architecture and the figurative arts. After the chapter on the years of Napoleonic rule, the volume ends with a remarkable synthesis by the editor. It would be invidious to single out individual contributions in a brief review, given the exceptional quality of almost all of them. The width of the authors' research (in a city unusual even by Italian standards in its wealth of written records), their sensitivity towards historical debates (as over family history or forms of popular piety) and their freshness in presentation of the evidence and conclusions bear witness to a consensus of approach and a firm editorial line rare in such collective histories.

The book locates Prato both in its internal functioning as a small city (a title it only finally achieved in 1653, after half a century's campaigning), and in its relations with its small but fertile countryside, with Florence and the Medici, with the Tuscan State, and with broader changes in the European economy, society, religion and culture. At the beginning of the story Prato had declined from its medieval glory, compressed as it was between nearby Florence and Pistoia. It was politically and economically subordinate to the former and subject to the ecclesiastical authority of the latter. It was humiliated by its sack in 1512 by the Spaniards and noted by visitors primarily for the number of its churches and convents. By the end of the eighteenth century, however, Prato was a more important economic centre than Florence, thriving on the manufacture (though unmechanized) of textiles and straw hats and with access to international markets through the port of Livorno. It was strongly conscious of its identity, though incapable of expressing it in any local cultural form. How this transformation was achieved and perceived is at the core of this book.

The authors bring out well how Prato differed specifically from other provincial cities in the new State of Tuscany. Its population grew little, from 6,000 to 7,500; but its textile manufactures, restricted by Florentine domination to the cheap end of the market, grew as Florence's economy contracted and as the economic axis of the State shifted westwards towards

Livorno. But perhaps the most fundamental difference was, on the one hand, Prato's avoidance of the process of "aristocratization" characteristic of late sixteenth and seventeenth-century Europe, and on the other hand the remarkable cohesion of its population. Its ruling class rarely turned to the land, perhaps because Florentines and religious institutions had bought up most of the *contado*; at best the law and the Church were seen as alternatives to manufacturing and trading. Above all, such commercial activities were always respected as providing a legitimate basis for social standing and public office. Always touchy about interference from Florence, the Prato élite manipulated municipal and charitable offices to

ensure a local monopoly, while maintaining itself openly as an oligarchy. Piety, expressed through the processions held by the confraternities and congregations, for which the Marian cult provided a catalyst, provided further cohesion, and helps to explain the 1787 riots against the reforming bishop Ricci. Contrasts in wealth were not perhaps as wide in Prato as in other Italian cities, despite the increase in poverty in the later eighteenth century. Certainly the provision of charity was far greater, through the munificent legacy of Francesco Datini. In a city of only some 1,200 to 1,600 families, such charitable resources oiled the wheels of patronage on which its social tranquillity ultimately rested.



Naples in 1446; a detail from a contemporary panorama, showing the Castel Nuovo and the fleet in harbour, reproduced from *The Age of the Renaissance* edited by Denis Hay (240pp. Thames and Hudson. £20. 0/500 04015 X).

## Napolitani at play

Jonathan Burnham

RAFFAELE LA CAPRIA  
*L'armonia perduta*  
186pp. Milan: Mondadori. L18,000.  
88 002 844 8

*L'armonia perduta* is a collection of articles, a large number of which were written for the *Corriere della sera*, loosely linked by the theme of Naples and the Neapolitans. Together they constitute an investigation of "Napoleitanità". Raffaele La Capria, himself a Neapolitan, is best known for his novel of Neapolitan life *Ferito a morte* (1961). The novelist tends to dominate in *L'armonia perduta*. In this collection, despite his musing and leisurely tone, La Capria is propounding a serious argument. He points out that some cities, like Paris or London, evolve in a straightforward way, progressing through various historical periods without missing a step. Others, like Venice, Prague, Alexandria, or Naples, come up against some historical obstacle which "blocks" their progress, turning them in upon themselves; La Capria indicates the characteristics shared by such cities: radical self-consciousness, an obsession with their own history, and a sterile nostalgia for the glories of the past.

In the case of Naples, La Capria attempts to locate, and explain the nature of, its particular "block". The crucial date is seen as 1799, the year of a revolution in which the populace revealed its strength to a terrified bourgeoisie. Before that date, Naples stood as a symbol of the Golden Age, a paragon of civilized harmony "between Nature and History, between Nature and Culture" (although the author notably fails to explain how such a harmony could allow for the kind of social injustice which leads to a revolution). 1799 marked the beginning of the decadence of Naples. "Napoleitanità" arose out of this decadence; indeed was invented by the bourgeoisie as a means of self-preservation. Threatened by a populace with too many new ideas of its own, the middle classes presented their members with a way of seeing themselves as uniquely Neapolitan, and in so doing successfully integrated two dispa-

rate and mutually hostile classes by granting them a common identity. "Napoleitanità" had its roots in the culture of the people, but by a sleight of hand that culture was modified and rendered essentially harmless. This was achieved by a clever linguistic manoeuvre. The bourgeoisie annexed the Neapolitan dialect, smoothed away its rougher edges and propagated the new language through popular song and the theatre, the mass media of the day. Within a short time the language of the backstreets had become the vernacular of the city, and thus the external symbol of a new unity. This process is vividly described by La Capria, who portrays the bourgeoisie as Orpheus taming the wild beasts with the "enchanted flute of dialect".

Much, however, had been sacrificed. The new "Napoleitanità" was, after all, no more than an artifice, and La Capria charts its inevitable degeneration into shallowness and empty gesture. Twentieth-century Neapolitans are, he explains, caught in a historical impasse: they long for the lost harmony of the past, but are unable to adapt to the present, or the future, because they are trapped behind the façade of a stylized version of their own identity. A great deal has changed since the end of the Second World War, but La Capria's account of Naples covers the period from 1799 to 1945 only. Nor does he propose any definition for "Napoleitanità", but rather is concerned to present the psychological history of a city in terms which have a wide range of application.

The pervasive theme of nostalgia and loss is amplified in the final section of the book: a lyrical evocation of the author's own childhood. La Capria's reminiscences are in their way as indirect as his presentation of history: we are presented with a series of visual images, of the sea, of the family home, of ruined villas overlooking the bay, of long summer days. The lost harmony is personal as well as universal, but once again there are no conclusions. Here, as in the rest of *L'armonia perduta*, the author's evasiveness, his disinclination to commit himself to any particular genre detracts from the book as a whole, although much is redeemed by the quality of the prose, which is lucid and well-crafted.

## The Fascist road to fortune

Adrian Lyttelton

DINO GRANDI  
*Il mio paese: Ricordi autobiografici*  
685pp. Bologna: Il Mulino. L50,000.  
88 150888 8

Dino Grandi was the most eloquent representative of that generation of young ex-officers who made the fortunes of Italian Fascism. He was typical of them in his combination of romantic political idealism, opportunism and impatient self-assertion, yet he was unusually astute and willing to learn. Ironically, his defeat in the bitter fighting of local Fascist politics proved a piece of good luck. It set him free from the narrow world of provincial Fascism. Mussolini, who both appreciated his ability and was doubtful about his loyalty, steered him away from internal politics and into foreign affairs, where he was quick to make his mark. As foreign minister from 1929 to 32 he played an important part in the negotiations for disarmament. As ambassador in London he won many friends and his ability was respected even by his enemies. Finally, he became the leader of the Fascist Fronte which helped to bring down Mussolini in July 1943. His role in the crisis of the régime was certainly more honourable than that of the taciturn Victor Emmanuel or the wily Marshal Badoglio, who let him run the risks while they took the profit. One cannot deny to Grandi some respect for civilized values and a measure of political courage.

Grandi's active political career came to an end in 1943. Since then, in a very long life, he has had plenty of leisure to construct his own version of the past. Inevitably, his autobiography is something of an apologia, which omits some of the less creditable aspects of his career and smooths out its contradictions. The picture that emerges is not wholly consistent or convincing because Grandi is trying, I think, to defend himself against two contrary accusations. The first, moral rather than political in nature, is that he was always looking for a chance to betray his leader Mussolini. Grandi's anxiety to prove that he was honest with Mussolini is excessive. If one believed him, one might have to take seriously his fulsome expressions of adulation for the Duce (not reproduced here). In fact, there is little reason to doubt that they were part of his "cover". He explains quite clearly in the section devoted to his embassy in London that expressions of Fascist enthusiasm were the necessary price to pay for the freedom to pursue a moderate line of action. (On one occasion, when he returned to Italy, he avoided dismissal as ambassador by appearing in public in the uniform of the Fascist militia.) But what distinguished him from other Fascist leaders was that loyalty or servility did not extinguish his critical intelligence or his capacity for independent action.

His relationship with Mussolini was a very complex one: it forms the central and most

interesting theme of his autobiography. Grandi first challenged Mussolini in 1921, when he emerged as the leader of the Fascist faction which opposed the Pact of Pacification with the socialists. Grandi tries to play down the embarrassing significance of this crucial stage in his career, during which he helped furnish a veil of intellectual respectability to the most ruthless and violent elements in the Fascist movement. It does not sit well with his later image as a man of peace; but then one should not expect political careers in a time of upheaval to be consistent. Grandi's attitude during the early part of the crisis, caused by the murder of the Socialist deputy Matteotti in June 1924, was somewhat ambiguous; he seems to have been tempted briefly by the idea of a new alliance with Mussolini's opponents within the movement. But he was successfully co-opted by the offer of a place in the government, and from then on he was always securely associated with the moderate or revisionist wing of Fascism. In fact, in 1922 he had already incurred the anger of the hard men of the movement for his disapproval of the March on Rome. Grandi—as he proved in England—was highly "clubbable", and in the unFascist atmosphere of Montecitorio, Geneva or the Farnesina he quickly took on the local colour. On the other hand, he was undoubtedly impressed by the power of Mussolini's political personality. While doubting the wisdom of his policies, he admired his charisma. The feeling that, against all the evidence, Mussolini might still arrive at the right answer by intuition died hard. Grandi's anti-German stance is well documented; but, according to Ciano, in June 1940 he was sufficiently shaken by the fall of France to believe that Mussolini's loyalty to Hitler might pay off after all.

Grandi's anglophilia became notorious, although it was not quite as wholehearted and unshadowed as it appears in retrospect. He could be exasperated (like many others) by the impenetrable correctness of a race he once described as "the Chinese of Europe". The delicate subject of his relations with Mosley and the British Fascist movement is one of the subjects he tactfully omits from his account. Grandi's political coup in February 1938, when he helped to bring about the resignation of Anthony Eden as foreign secretary, can hardly have been equalled in importance by any other ambassador to Britain. Eden had tried hard to stop Grandi from seeing Chamberlain. After a talk between all three men, the difference of opinion between Eden and Chamberlain over the advisability of making an approach to Mussolini, became an irreconcilable conflict. Grandi's account of this famous episode does not tally in its details with what he and others wrote nearer the time. The story that he made an explicit commitment about the withdrawal of Italian volunteers from Spain, in defiance of his instructions from Ciano, seems likely to be an over-dramatized presentation. It is more probable that he confined himself to hints,

which were seized on eagerly by Chamberlain. Although Eden is an equally partial witness, his account of the conversation fits well with Grandi's own reports of the time. "Grandi, who was a very skilful diplomat, did his stuff admirably. Whenever he paused, Neville Chamberlain encouraged him." Churchill's comment on the record of the conversation when he finally read it in 1948 was characteristically pithy: "It shows that he [Grandi] was determined to do you in". One can see, I think, from this that Grandi was deluding himself in 1943 when he believed that his personal friendship with Churchill could still be played as a political card. This was highly doubtful, especially with Eden as foreign secretary; Grandi was a relic of appeasement.

Grandi's success in February 1938 made him



Grandi, when Italian ambassador to the United Kingdom, in 1935; reproduced from Luigi Gagliardi's *Storia fotografica dell'impero fascista 1935-1941* (302pp, with 526 black-and-white and 36 colour photographs. Rome: Laterza. L40,000. 88 420 2646 8).

for a while an indispensable mediator between Chamberlain and Mussolini. He could claim some of the credit for Munich. It would probably be unfair to doubt Grandi's motives. He sincerely believed in Anglo-Italian reconciliation, and it had become clear that Eden was an obstacle to this. Grandi did not hide from his British interlocutors (including Eden himself) the ambiguities of his position. He admitted that he was out of favour and that his personal aims differed from those of his government. In these circumstances, Grandi could not avoid being an agent of deception, but the deception was Mussolini's and not his own. It is interesting to speculate on what difference it might have made had Grandi been foreign minister at the time of the Abyssinian War. His comments on it are interesting. He rejects completely the

argument that the British opposed Mussolini in Abyssinia out of concern for their imperial interests. It was concern with domestic opinion on the eve of an election which dictated the government's attitude. If Mussolini had held his hand until after the elections, Grandi argues, a compromise on the lines of the Hoare-Laval plan would have been concluded without a public outcry.

The major weight of the autobiography falls on foreign affairs. Grandi only briefly touches on the dramatic events of July 1943 in this book, since he published a separate account of them three years ago. The section of the book dealing with Grandi's early career as a Fascist leader is understandably more reticent than the rest, and does not add much to our knowledge. However, Grandi's portrait of his youthful development up to his conversion to Fascism is of considerable interest. The experience of the First World War was fundamental for young men of Grandi's generation; but it is surprising to see to what an extent in his case the ideas of the post-war "national revolutionaries" were already anticipated by the motifs of the anti-Giolittian rebellion of 1911-14. The sympathy for revolutionary syndicalism and the modernist movement within Catholicism; the hostility to orthodox socialism and to parliamentary liberalism; the rejection of mainstream nationalism as conservative and protectionist; all this came together in the aspiration to reconcile the masses with patriotism. Fascism seemed to offer a way of realizing this programme, as well as of relieving the frustrations engendered by the war. But it is important to note that not all those who wanted a "national revolution" accepted the Fascist claim to personify it; Grandi himself had many misgivings. Nor should one forget the importance of the more material interests of rural property, menaced by socialism, in determining his position. Grandi himself was a representative of the new class of small, upwardly-mobile proprietors who formed the core of agrarian Fascism. The national revolutionaries talked about the need for the masses to participate in the life of the state; but how was this apparently progressive aim to be achieved? The phrase which Grandi often used — "to make the masses join the state" ("far aderire le masse allo stato") — was more revealing than he intended. The masses were, indeed, made to join the state; they did not have much choice in the matter. Grandi's autobiography is a valuable document of the sources of Fascist political thinking, although it needs to be interpreted with care.

Grandi's vision of Fascism glosses over some unpleasant realities. The opponents of the régime would hardly agree, for example, that it only became "dictatorial" after 1929. Grandi himself was one of those who profited from the elimination of political competition to make a brilliant and rapid career. But one is left with the impression that the mature Grandi deserved to represent a better régime.

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## Backwards and forwards

Tobias Abse

ALICE A. KELIKIAN  
*Town and Country under Fascism: The transformation of Brescia 1915-1926*  
228pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press. £25.  
0 19 821970 9

Alice A. Kelikian's monograph marks a major shift of emphasis in Anglo-American provincial studies of Italy during the First World War and the rise of Fascism. This shift is at once geographical, sociological and political, away from the Po Valley, away from an exclusive concentration on agrarian social structure and away from the study of areas marked by a socialist predominance during the *biennio rosso*.

Kelikian's Brescia, as presented in *Town and Country under Fascism*, was a very different province, economically, culturally and electorally, from Paul Corner's Ferrara or Anthony Cardozo's Bologna. Although the plains in the south of the province bore a certain resemblance to those of the Valle Padana, Brescia had a varied mixture of property relations on the land. It was not overwhelmingly

characterized by a system of large estates and landless labourers like the much-studied Emilian provinces. While traditional forms of land tenure, as well as traditional ways of life, had come under pressure in the late nineteenth century, the mass of the Brescian peasantry maintained both their bond with the land and their traditional allegiance to the Catholic Church throughout the period Kelikian describes. It was political Catholicism, not socialism, that gained the largest percentage of the province's votes in 1919 and 1921.

Yet Brescia was no rural backwater. It displayed an idiosyncratic mixture of change and continuity, modernity and backwardness. It had an industrial tradition stretching back into the eighteenth century. Industry had grown up in the countryside, near forests, iron mines and mulberry trees, originating as a secondary source of employment for peasant families; in the town, schoolteachers and lawyers held sway. Brescian textiles and metallurgy had an industrial structure dominated by small-scale enterprises and, despite changes during the Giolittian era, even on the eve of the First World War manufacturing occupied only 93,969 out of a provincial population of 586,000. Kelikian sees economic and social

changes that occurred during the First World War as crucial factors in the transformation of Brescia. The massive state-subsidized expansion in the steel and armaments sector during the war altered social relations in the province, undermining the political authority of the old élites. This eroded the foundations of traditional liberalism and paved the way for Fascism. Kelikian's contribution to the social history of the industrial mobilization is unique in English, and ranks with the work of Stefano Musso, Alessandro Camarda and Santo Pellicani.

The bitter post-war rivalry between the Catholics and the socialists for the allegiance of the lower classes in the Bresciano was the main reason why the workers and peasants of the province were less successful than their counterparts in Ferrara or Turin in imposing their demands on the local industrialists or landowners in the years after the Armistice. The situation was further complicated by internal divisions within both the mass movements: among the socialists, between maximalists and reformists, and among the Popolari, between clerico-moderate notables and radical activists representing the rural poor.

The rise of Fascism in Brescia began in October 1920 and in many respects mirrored the

national pattern. As elsewhere, the respectable right turned to this hitherto marginal movement for assistance against the turbulent masses. But Augusto Turati did not achieve provincial dominance for his squads as rapidly as his Emilian counterparts. Although the socialists had been humbled by the spring of 1922, the Popolari were only brought to heel after the March on Rome. Turati also had to contend with dissidence within Brescian Fascism, fanned by his intransigent provincial neighbour and rival, the Cremonese *razza* Roberto Farinacci. On the one hand, this forced Turati to pose as the same sort of figure in order to curb traditional local notables; on the other, he was obliged to proclaim a fictitious loyalty to Mussolini, in order to enlist his aid against Farinacci. Turati's unique attempt to ride the tiger of industrial militancy by organizing a Fascist metal-workers' strike in 1925 adds further interest to this account.

Although Brescia may not have played as important a role in the rise of Fascism as Ferrara, the object of Alice Kelikian's concise provincial study is to portray a microcosm of northern Italy in these years. The only serious criticism one can make of this excellent book is that it contains almost no maps.



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## Behind the lines

### Lorna Sage

Easily the newest British publisher acquiring titles at the Frankfurt Book Fair this week must be Bloomsbury Publishing, which was officially launched only on Monday, and which has as yet no premises — except for the Frankfurt stand of course, booked as an act of faith some time before the chairman and managing director Nigel Newton (ex-Sidgwick and Jackson) had raised the money in the City for the new firm. Newton and the other three founding directors — David Reynolds (co-founder of Shuckburgh Reynolds), Liz Calder (from Cape, where she was editorial director) and Alan Wherry (sales director, from Penguin) — are planning, says their press release, "to take advantage of the opportunities opened up by the radical restructuring of the British publishing industry over the last two years". This, decoded, means setting up a small independent company in a context of hectic mergers — most recently, for example, the formation back in the summer of Unwin Hyman, who used to be George Allen & Unwin (united in 1914) and Bell & Hyman (1977, when the old friendly amperand still survived mergers) and who will for their part be moving out of Bloomsbury (and Southwark and Hemel Hempstead) quite soon for a bleak-sounding address "probably to the north of central London".

Not that Bloomsbury Publishing is swimming against the tide, or not exactly: the ICC Business Ratio Report, *Book Publishers* (ninth edition. Unnumbered pages. £137. 0 86761 851 7), does show that over the three years up to 1985 the largest companies enjoyed the largest return on capital; however, they also observe that "publishing still tends to work best when small teams of people cooperate, rather than as a collection of large company departments". Their financial analysis shows "renewed growth" pretty well all round ("Publishing Bucks Up" puns their press release), and defers in touchingly clumsy prose to the strange status of the industry's "product":

which defies many of the normal rules for assessing whether or not it should be launched, especially in the case of fiction, in which the hunch of an editor will account for more than anything else . . .

Which makes the Bloomsbury project sound promising, particularly to Liz Calder, famed for her hunches (which have included Salman Rushdie and Anita Brookner) and anyway a touch nostalgic for the far-off days, "in the very back of my thoughts", when the members of Virago Advisory Group sat around Carmen Callil's kitchen table and a publishing "house" seemed just that.

On the other hand, her partners' collective credits include the Rubik Cube books, *Live Aid* and Shirley Conran's *Lace*, and Bloomsbury plan to spend a percentage of sales revenue well above the norm on publicity. Their "image" seems to imply a kind of global cottage industry — in particular their most intriguing innovation, the establishment of an authors' trust, setting aside a significant amount of the firm's equity for "eligible" authors (not those who come in packages) who will, when the company is floated on the unlisted security market in four or five years' time, be able to take up shares, or sell them for cash. This is a most topical scheme, as it turns out, given the agenda of the Society of Authors' AGM on October 14, which includes recommendations that members shouldn't sign contracts with Century Hutchinson (Hutchinson were bought last year by three-year-old Century), who have broken off negotiations on a minimum terms agreement. One of the stickest points is copyright ownership: "Such is the pace of corporate and personnel changes these days", argues the Society of Authors, "that the author ought to have an opportunity to review his/her position and not be tied for the term of copyright" (currently a sentence of life plus fifty years).

Bloomsbury Publishing haven't yet entered this thicket, but must be hoping that the trust idea will ease their way through, by providing a different definition of loyalty. It is aimed (says Nigel Newton) "at making our authors involved in our destiny", and conversely it's "a way of becoming more closely tied to the people who'll make or break us". The house style, so far at least, seems designed to quell the doubts of writers like Fay Weldon, who has

observed apropos of Century Hutchinson that "writers are beginning to see that we are not living in a gentlemanly world". Gentlemen isn't quite the right word, but the "Bloomsbury" name is redolent of less crudely worldly ways. As is the lady archer on their letterhead, a stiff-necked Diana — still at an early design stage, according to Liz Calder ("I had to persuade the boys she would be a good idea") — limbering up for a much more animated posture in the near future.

The fourth set of "Poems on the Underground" are being posted in tube trains this week, and will travel the network until Christmas, rounding out the first year of Judith Chernaik's inspired project. The original idea was to widen the dissemination of poetry (supported by the Compton Poetry Fund, an impressive selection of publishers, and more recently Greater London Arts and the British Council, plus of course London Regional Transport) and it has succeeded beyond expectation. Gone overground, indeed: the mere act of liberating poems from books (and, presumably, from Poetry) and putting them in such a place, says Ms Chernaik modestly, is "breaking down some sort of barrier". The 1,000 Underground copies are now generating a demand for another 3,000 from schools, libraries, hospitals, prisons and fifty British Council libraries abroad. The Underground *imprimatur* seems to make the difference, though the combination of the classic, the unexpected and the topical in the selection — Francis Thompson's "At Lord's" — went down very well in the cricket season — must have something to do with it too. This time round the magic touch is being applied to Wordsworth's "Everyone Sang", Denise Levertov's "Living" ("each minute the last minute"), winty Anon ("Western wind when wilt though blow") and Edwin Morgan's "Loch Ness Monster's Song", a concrete poem of which Judith Chernaik is particularly fond, with its unanswered questions — "Grof grawff gahff?" — and vanishing tail:

blm, plm,  
blm, plm,  
blm, plm,  
blp.

This time the topicality belongs to Sassoon, matched with Remembrance Day, when "Poems on the Underground" will branch out yet further with a twelve-hour "Open Reading" at St James's, Piccadilly, attended by many of the living poets who have had the tube treatment, including Edwin Morgan and Grace Nichols (November 11, 11am to 11pm, admission free; sets of the five poems can be obtained at 50p per set from "Poems on the Underground", 124 Mansfield Road, London NW3 2JB, where donations towards the cost of posters, £2.50 per set, and the rental of tube space, £2.50 per month, are also welcomed).

There's still just time to catch one of the most

fleeting exhibitions of the season, "Summoned by Bells — Betjeman Remembered", at the Highgate Literary and Scientific Institution, which opened shyly on September 24 and closes on Sunday, October 5. Fittingly, perhaps, most of the 130-odd items are a touch ephemeral — a first stab at setting up a Betjeman collection to complement the Coleridgeana the Institution's library already possesses. There are lots of photographs, some old school ties (not claimed to have been Betjeman's own), and many pin-ups of steam trains, stations and churches. Most of Betjeman's manuscripts are at the University of Victoria in Vancouver, but there are a couple of manuscript poems that escaped on display; also two pages of the typescript of "Summoned by Bells", with irreverent marginal comments from Tom Driberg, John Sparrow, and Betjeman's publisher John Murray, plus very odd and very rare items, like a copy of "Some Immortal Hours" — a rhapsody of the Celtic Twilight wrought in words and watercolour by Deirdre O'Betjeman" — a seven-page spoof hand-coloured by Betjeman, John Murray and John Piper over a weekend in November 1962, and published by Murray in a facsimile edition of twenty copies.

And I see them riding the changing horses of literature, scattering all before them in the thunder of their language as they shout and spur their steeds towards the sea in the glorious meaningful words: have handed down to them the hills . . .

As the attack proceeds, we are asked to believe it was questions rather than answers he got wrong, and that the supposedly new study of image-making and iconography "leaves the attribution of a pot a marginal issue, if not entirely irrelevant". But to these interesting studies he made through his indices a fundamental contribution. He was casting light on iconography from the time of his earliest articles, and never ceased to do so.

Mary Beard's innuendo about the supposed analogy with Berenson's operations seems to me even more wide of the mark, and her scorn of the "attempt to deduce the inner truth from superficially insignificant clues", invoking the cases of Freud and Sherlock Holmes, wider still, as I think anyone would admit who knew Beard's work well. He did not make deductions from a cigarette end or some detail of a dream; he devoted a lifetime of intense, dedicated study to his subject, and he was good at Greek verses because he knew them so extremely well.

PETER LEVI.  
Austins Farm, Stonesfield, Oxford.

John Dryden

Sir, — I am sorry that David Hopkins (Letters, September 19) takes exception to my review of his book *John Dryden*, particularly as I wrote that "this enthusiasm is refreshing". He raises several objections to my review and I shall try, briefly, to answer them. First, let me concede the point about dates. My phrase about the poetry "of the 1660s and 70s" was an ill-advised attempt at ellipsis. The significant date is 1682 not 1680, and I should have repeated the accurate formulation used earlier in the review when I wrote: "According to this view, nothing that Dryden wrote before 1682 is of more than intermittent interest."

It is not the renewal of interest in Dryden's later poetry and translations which I regard as unhappily perverse. Indeed, I have recently been particularly stimulated by Emrys Jones's re-appraisal of Dryden's translation of Lucretius. My reservations concern the corollary, which Hopkins seems to feel necessary, of downgrading Dryden's earlier work. Hopkins objects to my description of his tendency of pronouncing poems either "good" or "bad", yet in his letter he confirms his desire to discriminate between works of "living interest" and those which are "limited and dull". It was precisely this confident segregation and the language in which it is expressed, which I described as yielding "faint echoes of old Leavisite certainties". I did not allege that he disparaged *Absalom and Achitophel* or *Mac Flecknoe* in blanket or any other terms, since in fact neither poem is mentioned in my review. However, since he feels that my remarks were unsubstantiated, allow me to offer some brief illustrations. Dealing with *Absalom and Achitophel*, he writes: "As an example of unsatisfactory writing in the poem we may consider the portraits of the 'short File' of King Charles's loyal supporters . . ." Earlier he writes that it would be difficult to include any of Dryden's plays "of the 1660s and 70s . . . in a short list of Dryden's greatest achievements". It is this notion of drawing up short-lists, or describing poetry as either satisfactory or un-

## Letters

### 'Beazley and Oxford'

Sir, — Since no one else seems to have protested about Mary Beard's absurdly negative review of *Beazley and Oxford*, edited by Donna Kurtz (September 12), I feel the need to do so, because having studied the book carefully I disagree with Mary Beard wholeheartedly. I should add that I write on no one's behalf and am not even a marginal member of the classical archaeological establishment at Oxford.

Her attack on Beazley is in the first place oddly phrased: "It is becoming increasingly felt that the eventual judgment on 'Beazleyism' will be essentially negative." This impersonal phrasing will not do. Whose feeling about the future are we being asked to trust? We are told that in a different field "the Morellian method as practised by Beazley often conspicuously fails to get the answer right". But whatever methods Beazley used, and I think he was less simple than Mary Beard makes out, he certainly did not offend conspicuously fail to get answers right.

As the attack proceeds, we are asked to believe it was questions rather than answers he got wrong, and that the supposedly new study of image-making and iconography "leaves the attribution of a pot a marginal issue, if not entirely irrelevant". But to these interesting studies he made through his indices a fundamental contribution. He was casting light on iconography from the time of his earliest articles, and never ceased to do so.

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satisfactory, which led me to say, in a phrase which I deleted from a first draft of my review, that he pronounces poems good or bad with the confidence of a school report.

I am by no means hostile to Hopkins's book, and welcome it as an introductory study. I merely wished to indicate that his assertions belong to a particular critical tradition. When he writes that readers may feel that Dryden "has not managed to invest the kingship with that aura of sanctity with which Shakespeare surrounded the figure of Duncan in *Macbeth*, and which he brought alive imaginatively", both the contrast itself, and the vocabulary in which it is expressed, imply some simple evaluative certainties which, regrettably perhaps, serious modern criticism can no longer indulge.

DAVID NOKES.  
Department of English Language and Literature,  
King's College London (KQC), Strand, London WC2.

### Cultural Property

Sir, — Edward Ullendorff (Letters, September 12), responding to my own letter of August 29, has drawn attention to the work of Enrico Cerulli, Richard Pankhurst and Stanislaw Chujacki in revealing much of the history and influence of the *Kwer'ata Re'essu*. The last-named of these authorities has recently examined nearly sixty surviving Ethiopian paintings inspired by the Flemish or Portuguese original from the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries (Supplement 42 to *Annali* 45, 1985).

However, the story must be brought up to date. The *Kwer'ata Re'essu* appears to be no longer in the possession of the person identified by Dr Pankhurst in 1979. When I visited Portugal the following year, it was clear that the present owner wishes to remain anonymous. In Ethiopia, meanwhile, interest in the return of a national treasure is as strong as ever; and it has been the subject of a poem by Tsengai Gebre-Medhin, the country's foremost playwright and poet.

Following my attendance at the 8th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies in 1984, I have undertaken an attempt to trace the *Kwer'ata Re'essu*, and to assist in its return to the country in whose history it played such a notable part. It would be fitting if none of the cost of its repurchase were borne by Ethiopia. Funding should come through a public appeal and, in the meanwhile, any light that could be thrown on the mystery of its whereabouts would be gratefully received.

I hope I may be allowed to make a further point on the wider question of the Magdala manuscripts. Acquired by Britain in circumstances of dubious legality (military victory) nearly 120 years ago, many are known to have belonged to the church of Medhane Alem at Magdala, and are so inscribed. This is acknowledged, for example, in Professor Ullendorff's own *Catalogue of Ethiopian Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library, Oxford* (1951). The whiff of a sacrilegious aspect to the acquisition of the Magdala collections is strong.

STEPHEN BELL.  
86 New Kings Road, London SW6.

### 'The Cambridge History of Iran'

Sir, — Reviewing Volume Six of *The Cambridge History of Iran* (September 12), Robert Irvin remarks how extraordinary it is that H. R. Roemer's narrative of the career of Timur is the first serious account to appear in English since 1962. As the person responsible for turning the German original into some semblance of an acceptable English narrative — almost ten years ago now, and for the customary poor fee — I find it equally extraordinary that the volume neither indicates that Professor Roemer's chapter has been translated nor acknowledges the translator. The same applies to the chapter on the Safavids and to others which, as I recall, were the work of my then colleague E. P. Dickins. On reflection, perhaps it is not so extraordinary after all: merely another indication of the low esteem in which translation, academic or literary, is generally held.

DAVID HORROCKS.  
Department of Modern Languages, University of Keele, Staffordshire.

### 'World of Secrets'

Sir, — May I correct one specific point in Robert Cecil's very fair review of my *World of Secrets* (September 26).

He notes that I received help from the Central Intelligence Agency in my study. I would have gladly perused the archives of that institution. But I had no such luck; all I had at my disposal were intelligence summaries declassified under the Freedom of Information Act which are accessible to everyone. It would be inaccurate (and impolite) to imply that conversations with former intelligence directors were of no use at all; they did provide in some instances perspective and background. But I doubt whether I learned a single fact which was not in the public domain. The subject of my book was not the collection of intelligence but its impact on policy-making. On this topic the information was bound to come from the consumers of intelligence rather than its producers.

WALTER LAQUEUR.  
1800 K Street NW, Washington, DC 20006.

### Jesus' Genealogy

Sir, — May I be permitted to explain, in reply to Benedict Anderson (Letters, September 12), why the mention of Ruth as ancestress of both David and Jesus is "crucial". She was, of course, a Moabite woman, and her prominently stressed position as the progenitrix of the emblematic King David, as well as of Jesus, has long been accepted as having implications of some significance.

EDWARD ULLENDORFF.  
4 Bludon Close, Oxford.

### The Agenda Club

Sir, — I am pleased to be able to inform your Oxford correspondent, Lou Burnard (Letters, August 8), that the Cambridge University Library possesses no fewer than six items published for the Agenda Club, including two editions of "An Open Letter" (1910 and 1912). The "Programme of Work" lists six projects, including the Golf Caddies' Enquiry, the committee for which includes A. A. Milne, possibly the A. A. M. who compiled the report. Unfortunately it is now too late to take advantage of the membership application form slipped in to the Society's "Calendar".

R. G. E. PINCH.  
Emmanuel College, Cambridge.

### Tchaikovsky at Edinburgh

Sir, — I, too, noticed, at the Maly Theatre production in Edinburgh, that M Triquet (or Trike) sang his song for Tatiana's name-day party in Russian, not French. This was at a performance of *Eugene Onegin*; but Arthur Jacobs (Commentary, September 5) appears to have heard it at a performance of *The Queen of Spades*.

Obtrusive as the Maly scene-shifters were, I don't think they could have gone so far as to lift this episode from one opera and dump it in another.

JANET ADAM SMITH.  
57 Lansdowne Road, London W11.

### Plays for Pedestrians

Sir, — Surely it was Shaw in the Preface to *Spirit Joan*, and not O'Neill writing of his own plays, who refused abridgment in order to oblige the commuters (Commentary, August 15)? I should not like to think that O'Neill was guilty of plagiarism, however bad a writer he may have been.

JOHN G. BOWEN.  
The Hotchkiss School, Lakeville, Connecticut 06039.

Because of an editorial error in Gordon S. Wood's review of *Franklin of Philadelphia* by Esmond Wright (August 29), the title of Claude-Anne Lopez and Eugénie W. Herbert's book on Franklin was incorrectly given as *Mon Cher Papa: Franklin and the ladies of Paris*, rather than *The Private Franklin: The man and his family*.

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## COMMENTARY

## Literary remains

Oliver Reynolds

ALAN BENNETT  
Kafka's Dick  
Royal Court Theatre

Kafka thinks he is dying. Unhappy at the thought of his work surviving him, he enjoins his friend, Max Brod, to burn it all: stories, letters and novels. He also insists on there being no biography. He then sleeps and dreams. His dream forms the main body of the play and shows him returning after his death to find that Brod has disobeyed him: Kafka is famous as a writer and man. His name has entered language, as Brod tells Kafka's father: "Your son now has adjectival status in Japan." This play, directed by Richard Eyre, is hardly Kafkaesque (Kafka's longest speech, presumably pastiche, achieves a gentle tedium) and, unfortunately, seems less Bennett-like than Bennett-ish.

Much of the comic writing in the play seems based on the premise that mere mention of a well-known writer or philosopher, plus an odd biographical fact, is worth a laugh. Thus Kafka reappears in the home of an English couple, Sydney and Linda, not long after the husband has asked the wife, "How do you know Scott Fitzgerald had a small . . . thing?" (The play's title avoids such cynicism: ticket-sales have been brisk.) Whether or not this device made its first appearance in *Beyond the Fringe*, it is now ageing fast and starting to repeat itself: how many people will need the play's reminder that T. S. Eliot is an anagram of toilets? The relentless combination of the reconcile and the snotty puts a strain on characterization. Alison Steadman, gamely playing Linda, has to begin as a suburban dumb blonde (trying to tempt her husband away from his bookcase and into the bedroom), but is later given several snappy lines that sound more intelligent than the character. Then, in what seems a twinge of

conscience, there is a brief verbal curtsy towards the fact of her being a woman when she addresses Kafka on his role as a writer with some sorry lines of fem-speak: "The one thing you never transformed yourself into was the lowliest creature of all, . . . a woman."

Steadman's, though, is not the most daunting task. Bennett's stage-directions ask for a "tall" Kafka; as played by Roger Lloyd Pack, he has the awkward ranginess of a giraffe. Brod's biography referred to Kafka as "a saint"; Bennett's contention is that biography is the opposite of hagiography and his Kafka is precious, conceited, self-pitying and guilt-ridden (and not too funny either). Brod described Kafka's deep and convincing reading of his own work; the voice here is squeaky and sham-solenn. There is also the dusting-off of an antique piece of reach-me-down characterization: when Kafka sees a row of his books, he wrings his hands. This, with his dark swept-back hair, suggests Peter Cushing as Ullrich Heep. Much of the writing seems cut off from affection for its subject and there are also hints of that farcure's stand-by, the funny foreigner (though foreignness here only goes so far: Kafka's and Brod's Jewishness is all but ignored). What we're left with seems to be a Kafka for the coach-parties, *Travesties* without the panache. Things are redeemed a little by a surprise ending and a lot by Jim Broadbent as Kafka's father. His shop in Prague may well have been relocated in the West Riding, but this allows him to call his son a "dismal Jimmy" in a voice like coal going down a chute.

Kafka once visited Brod and, walking into a room, woke Brod's father, asleep in a chair. The biography tells us that "instead of apologizing, he said, in an indescribably gentle way, raising a hand as if to calm him and walking softly on tiptoe through the room, 'Please look on me as a dream.'" A version of this last sentence appears in Bennett's play: he could have included a lot more of Kafka's gentleness, grace and irony.

## In out-work

Duncan Wu

SHIRLEY GEE  
Ask for the Moon  
Hampstead Theatre

There are several magical moments in this play. The most striking occurs when three lace-making sisters in 1840 hold up a finished piece of lacework which floats in the air above them. "It's like a mist", says Fanny (Jane Horrocks). That moment is echoed later, when Lil (Brenda Bruce), Fanny's modern counterpart, rises from the sewing machine in the sweatshop where she has spent her life, examines an old lace handkerchief, and remembers her grandmother's words: "The shadows of all our lives are in this lace." Both statements focus the play's concerns powerfully.

Divided between the three young lace-makers and three women in a modern-day sweatshop, *Ask for the Moon* examines the exploitation of women by a male-based economy during the last 150 years. "You can never stop it", says Eugene (Brian Hall), the sweatshop manager, "we're animals!" Although the women in 1840 live under even worse pressure from the local squire, who pays them less than a subsistence wage, industrialization has brought its uniquely degrading jargon. "Sub-ordinary" is the word Eugene uses to describe Lil's failing ability, due to age, to complete garments at the required rate, and the system's final humiliation is to label her "a hiccup on the production line".

During the first act, Lil resists these words, substituting her botched garments for those of Carrie (Mona Hammond), a black immigrant working to support her six children. When Car-

lie discovers Lil's dishonesty, she is the first to tell her that she is nothing more than cheap labour. "But I'm Eugene's best girl!" insists Lil. "It's been a long time since you've been a girl", Carrie responds.

Lil's delusion of having a permanent place in the sweatshop as the girl she was over forty years ago links her with Fanny, who believes in the love of the man whose baby she bears. Although both women trust in something more than a purely economic reality, Fanny, at least for a time, attains the object of her dream: a child. "I'll have more than this lace to remember me by!" "Keeping up your child and your work is asking for the moon", responds her sister, Mercy (Victoria Burton).

The persistent aspiration to a fuller life is symbolized by their lace, used to adorn the brides and babies of the rich; it is an aspiration Lil has failed to achieve. "Who was I? Was I really somebody?" she asks in desperation. She has never married or loved, and will leave nothing behind her, not even a piece of lace. "We all end up cut down like grass", she says, using a biblical image that foreshadows Fanny's ecstasy at hearing men singing as they cut the corn in the fields.

That moment of possession, and again when the lace floats in the air above the sisters' heads, distinguishes this play on a familiar topic. Unlike many polemical pieces, it does not hector its audience, and works well as theatre. Its two weaknesses are Eugene (energetically portrayed by Brian Hall) who, for the first act, is too evidently a caricature; and a slackening of control in action and dialogue towards the play's climax, due partly to its extreme emotion. Otherwise, *Ask for the Moon* is a crafted, thoughtful work, with a fine cast under John Dove's sensitive direction. Brenda Bruce and Mona Hammond work well together and Jane Horrocks's performance as Fanny is excellent.

As part of the Swedish Festival of Poetry, which takes place from October 4 to 8, seven Swedish poets will be giving poetry readings at the National Poetry Centre on October 6, 7 and 8.

## Conversational courtesies

David Nokes

Talking to Writers  
Channel 4

Talk is something that television tends to avoid, preferring either the safe anecdotal shallows of chat, or the firm adversarial structure of an interview. In offering us this new series devoted to modern literature in the form of several long filmed conversations, without even such visual distractions as captions, film-clips or old photographs, Channel 4 is taking two risks at once. Yet, on the evidence of the first two programmes, it has succeeded very well. As a presenter, Hermione Lee has the right blend of informal enthusiasm and informal control, so that we feel neither like eavesdroppers on a tête-à-tête, nor like gate-crashers at a tutorial. Though her initial promise of a "world tour" of literature sounded somewhat ominous (if it's Wednesday it must be Eco), these two programmes on Mario Vargas Llosa and Julian Barnes successfully used questions of national identity as a means of exploring rather than evading literary issues.

Vargas Llosa offered a courteous but foxy performance of teeth and smiles. Wasn't there something of a contradiction, Lee suggested, in the fact that he was a moderate in politics but that his fiction oozed fanaticism and extremism? Vargas Llosa's teeth gleamed in assent. "I must fight with myself", he said. The lure of violence fascinated him, in particular the violence of political activism which begins in a heroic adventure and concludes in fanaticism and brutality. He acknowledged his rejection of Marxism. Political ideology, he explained, was a kind of fiction which refused to recognize itself as such. Literary fictions, on the other hand, were lies which pointed towards more enduring truths. In his suspicion of intellectuals and praise for the common sense of the common people, it was possible to see the democratic populism which led the President of Peru to offer him the Prime Ministership. Most importantly, Vargas Llosa identified the emptiness of Latin America, its lack of literary traditions as the source of both richness and rashness.

## After the truth

Antony Beevor

Eleni  
Various cinemas

Three years ago, Nicholas Gage's book *Eleni* (which was reviewed in the *TLS* on January 20, 1984) enjoyed a remarkable international success. His powerful story reconstructed the events in a Greek mountain village which led to the torture and execution of his mother by Communist partisans after she had sent him and his sisters to safety. The film, despite innumerable changes, is still presented as a true account when it really belongs to that dubious frontier region between fact and fiction.

In the book, Gage devoted over 600 pages to the Axis occupation and the Greek Civil War, and less than eighty to his own research activities. In the film the role of the investigative reporter who tracks down Katis, the Stalinist judge, is swollen and embellished to counterpoint the central story of Eleni herself. The relentless cross-cutting between 1947 and 1980, mainly a device to heighten tension, necessitates some gross simplifications, far beyond the normal needs of adaptation.

The celluloid Nicholas Gage (a good cold-fish performance from John Malkovich) unsettles his wife with his obsession with the events of thirty years before. And having persuaded the *New York Times* to post him to Athens, he sets out to discover who was responsible for his mother's death. The breakthrough comes when he traps and threatens a former Communist guerrilla, who is caricatured as a greasy pimp. (It is not surprising that most of the names have been changed. Some of the distortions seem to go beyond even the usual Manchurian tendency of melodrama.)

Not content with dramatizing Gage's quest, those responsible for the film evidently felt compelled to tamper with Eleni's story as well.

Traditions, both cultural and literary, have always been evident in the novels of Julian Barnes. Hermione Lee's introduction, deceptively generous, fixed the tone for this conversation. His was a talent she found peculiarly English, she said, perhaps hinting at a paradox in an author who has so conspicuously advertised an obsession with Flaubert. Barnes began confidently with the anecdote which also appears at the start of his new novel *Starting from the Sun*. An airman, diving rapidly 10,000 feet is able to see the sun rise twice in a single day. It is an image which would seem to defy boundaries of time and space. Yet the pilot is in fact an Englishman "poaching over Northern France"; the parallel seems hardly coincidental. Conversation took place in a very English walled garden. Barnes talked a good deal about courage, and also about intelligence which, he remarked, had much to do with confidence. He revealed himself as the kind of person who goes into a supermarket thinking about baked beans and comes out thinking about God. He read from his new novel a passage on the "naïveté" kind of death, in an air-crash, surrounded by plastic trays and soft furnishings. His voice had a kind of high Anglican confidence, and the fastidious repetitions took on the tones of a litany. Gradually Lee's questions became sharper. Surely the China scenes in the new novel were a cynical and opportunistic use of old travel notes, she suggested, perhaps recalling the embassy placed on such material in *Flaubert's Paris*. "Thanks a lot", Barnes replied. Didn't it sound increasingly like Philip Larkin's she was on (evidently not a compliment). Barnes evaded the question though the tone of his answers rather confirmed it. What was his reaction to post-structuralist theses devoted to his novels? "Throw them in the waste-basket". So much for Jake Balokowsky. "Not much sex", she complained of the new novel, leaving us to add "we're British". Sex was no big deal any more, he replied. He was more interested in sad sex and bad sex anyway, not all that Sixties fun. Barnes concluded with a sad image of the writer building sand-castles against the waves of death. Larkin might have been proud of him.

Starting it seems after the departure of the Germans, a peasant idyll is shown as suddenly shattered by the arrival of Communist partisans, who terrorize the villagers of Lia into obedience. There is not the slightest hint that these ELAS guerrillas had been there fighting the Germans since 1943. And even less that Lia was "a village so strongly sympathetic to ELAS that it was called 'Little Moscow'". To have shown the villagers' support for the guerrillas change to hatred as a result of their desperate measures in the face of defeat, would have been far more effective. The truth often is. Instead, the brutality and Stalinist paranoia are shown without any context.

In one of the key scenes, Eleni's trial is turned into a simplistic confrontation between good and evil. Anything which might interfere, such as the fact that even committed Communists spoke out in her support, is suppressed. Katis, the terrifying judge (a marvellous performance by Oliver Cotton), can only make Eleni appear even more like a martyred saint. Sadly, Kate Nelligan is allowed none of those touches which just saved the character in the book, from being a mere icon.

The final confrontation of the film in which Eleni's son tracks down Katis is gripping professional entertainment. But such concessions to Hollywood formula—one cannot help thinking of the film as a cross between *Roots* and *The President's Men*—finally destroy the film's credibility, however real the events on which it is based. Shamelessly slick touches may manipulate emotions at the time, but afterwards you are left with a growing suspicion of having just seen a thriller masquerading as a moral play. One suspects that the uplifting finale there so that audiences can go home with a warm feeling about family values. Nicholas Gage was one of the film's producers. He can hardly disclaim all responsibility for such changes to a story which was supposed to have been a personal crusade for the truth.

## Continuous motion

Julian Budden

Otello  
Various cinemas

No one could accuse Franco Zeffirelli of not knowing about opera. Ever since the late 1950s his productions have been familiar at some of the world's leading opera-houses and many of them remain engraved in the memory—the realistic picture of Sicilian village life in *Cavalleria Rusticana*, the spacious and atmospheric *Don Giovanni*, a *Rigoletto* whose opening scene was so lavish that a long interval was required to follow it at a point where no interval should have occurred. It is difficult to think of any producer who surpasses him in visual imagination. In this respect his film version of Verdi's *Otello* more than comes up to expectations. Over and over again it uses the cinematic medium to achieve effects which lie far beyond the scope of a stage production yet which serve the purpose of the drama. The love duet of Act One is made to open in Otello's bed-chamber where Desdemona lies awaiting her spouse surrounded by an aura of radiant purity; and the mind at once leaps forward to the last act where the Moor approaches the bed with very different intentions. The music which follows is accompanied by visual flashbacks—Otello holding Desdemona spell-bound with tales of his adventures under the watchful gaze of her father and even at one point the adventures themselves (not such a happy idea since the accompanying noises distract from the beauties of the score). Iago delivers his "Credo" at the top of a curious hollow tower like a well-shaft; and as he speaks of the nothingness of death the camera parallels the long orchestral diminuendo by panning down to where we can hear the slow dripping of water. Throughout Zeffirelli elicits superb performances from his singers with never a meaningless glance or pose. Plácido Domingo (Otello), Justino Diaz (Iago) and especially Katia Ricciarelli (Desdemona) have never appeared to better advantage on stage.

The musician, however, will probably have two objections. The first concerns the amount of continuous movement that Zeffirelli imposes on his scenes and which often conflicts with the character of the music it accompanies. At the start of Act Two an instrumental prelude establishes the false suavity with which Iago pretends to comfort Cassio (clearly they have already been conversing before we actually hear them). In the film this music is played to shots of a busy quayside with appropriate noise and bustle. What is more, the passage is repeated after the "Credo" as background to Iago's actions. During the handkerchief trio Iago and Cassio indulge in a playful fencing bout, and the clash of their swords obscures some of Verdi's most delicate scoring (not that the orchestral sound seems to have been much considered, so forward is the placing of the voices throughout).

Still more questionable is the reckless butchery of the score, from which Zeffirelli has cut forty minutes. True he includes two movements from the ballet that Verdi added to the French version of the opera. But the "Danse arabe", delightful as it is, is no substitute for the bonfire chorus at the point where Zeffirelli has seen fit to place it. Other casualties include the duet of Act Three from which a central portion is cut, the "handkerchief trio", shorn of its concluding allegro, and the "concertante finale" of Act Three—the musical pinnacle of the opera—is limited to Desdemona's opening solo (does one improve a church by removing its spire?) As for the Willow Song, "I find it very boring", Zeffirelli said in an interview. So the first part of Act Four up to the "Ave Maria" is made to consist of a rag-bag of musical phrases which lead nowhere.

Zeffirelli maintains that had Verdi been alive today he would readily have agreed to a screen adaptation of his greatest tragic opera. Perhaps; but he would have insisted on making the adaptation himself. Failing that, I doubt if he would have much confidence in someone who said he found his Willow Song boring.

## Literary and other fronts

H. R. Woudhuysen

1886 and the Creation of the Sidney Legend  
Leiden, September 2-4

What should have been a merely academic conference held to commemorate the 400th anniversary of the death of Sir Philip Sidney in a minor skirmish outside the town of Zutphen, turned out to be among other things a nerve-racking confrontation between liberal views over academic freedom of speech and some determined Dutch opposition to anything to do with South Africa. At short notice the conference was moved from Zutphen to Leiden, where it was held in the austere but welcoming Lohorsterkerk, a Mennonite Church. Even there the second morning session was disrupted by demonstrators who were eventually moved by the police. A final trip back to Zutphen, to see the town and site of the battlefield where Sidney received his fatal wound and what was by all accounts an excellent exhibition incorporating material lent from Penshurst and Continental collections, came rather late on the last day.

The conference's two themes emerged as Sidney's Protestantism, which helped to explain what he was doing in the Low Countries, and his posthumous reputation as a writer and politician-soldier. The two outstanding papers on these subjects were Simon Adams's animated and brilliantly lucid exposition of the political circumstances surrounding the Earl of Leicester's expedition to the Low Countries which led to the death of his nephew and heir and Sir Roy Strong's emotional account of Sidney's Appearance Reconsidered. The papers among Sir Roy's discoveries concerning portraits of Sidney (a subject last fully explored by A. C. Judson in 1958), concerned the Longest picture of the poet. This, he was able to show, had in fact been at Penshurst

until the middle of the seventeenth century (it was seen there by John Aubrey, who refers to in his "brief life" of Sidney without mentioning that he was describing a portrait). He also suggested that it might be an *ad vivum* likeness given by the sitter to his sister the Countess of Pembroke. In the same vein John Gouws spoke on nineteenth-century pictorial representations, chiefly Benjamin West's, of Sidney's last act on the battlefield of sharing a bottle (there is no evidence, it was pointed out, that it contained only water), with a dying common soldier.

On the more literary front there was a dazzling and sometimes dizzying exploration by Michael Allen of *The Defence's* debt to Plato's *The Sophist*, an unparalleled slide-display of editions of the *Arcadia* from Bent Juel-Jensen and a good account from Margaret Hannay of the Countess of Pembroke's role in the creation of the Sidney legend. One of the more contentious papers was Germaine Warkentin's latest progress report on her work on the Sidney family library catalogue (see *TLS*, December 6, 1985). Over the whole conference, as well as the political issue of the presence of a South African (among participants from Britain, North America, Holland, Belgium and India), lay the shadow of the premature death of its originator Jan Van Dorsten who would, no doubt, have enjoyed the whole occasion and its honouring of the memory of Sir Philip Sidney tremendously.

The British Academy's Chatterton Lecture, which is given annually on an English poet, will be delivered this year at the British Academy, 20-21 Cornwall Terrace, London NW1 4QP on Thursday October 23. The lecturer will be Dr A. J. Minnis of the University of Bristol and the subject of the lecture will be "From Medieval to Renaissance? Chaucer's Position on Past Gentility". The lecture will begin at 5pm and admission is free.

## COMMENTARY



An engraving from Thomas Lani's *Sequitur celebris et pompa funeris*, showing the "knights of his kyndred and frendes" who attended the funeral of Sir Philip Sidney in 1586/7. The funeral roll from the Aldrich Collection in Christ Church, Oxford, is on show in Sir Philip Sidney: Life, death and legend, an exhibition to commemorate the 400th anniversary of Sidney's death, at the Bodleian Library, Oxford, until January 31, 1987. A catalogue of the exhibition is available from the Bodleian Library.

## The unstoppable Bess

John Pitcher

THOMAS HEYWOOD  
The Fair Maid of the West  
Swan Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

Thomas Heywood's *The Fair Maid of the West* is Elizabethan pulp theatre at its most unexceptional, most unlearned and most unprovocative. Claims for its social realism (the elephants' graveyard for any play) look rather thin if we compare it with a good many scenes in Dekker, or with passages from the novels and pamphlets of the period. Where Deloney catches at (or invents) the speech manners of one gentle craft or another, or Nashe apes this or that snobbish pedantry, Heywood gives us characters and language which are strangely unrooted in the circumstances and settings he proposes. The details and personalities are all there—from roaring boys to kitchen maids, from a sea fight with the Spanish to stout English hearts triumphing over barbarous heathens—and yet none of this, in its peculiarity, fills out the play, or gives it something stubbornly resistant (and therefore interesting) to later readings.

*The Fair Maid of the West* was written in two parts, separated by as much as thirty years, but what is remarkable is how little difference there is in the quality of writing between the parts. Across the span of time, say, *Hamlet* to *The Changeling*, Heywood managed to keep his own verse and prose at the same level of well-phrased and slightly pressureless politeness. Even his jealous and voluptuous Queen of Fez (in Part Two) keeps an odd poise and decorum: "I should doubt I were a perfect woman, but degenerate / From mine own sex if I should suffer this".

Faced with a certain inexpressiveness in its language, Trevor Nunn has chosen to reproduce the play as an Elizabethan romp. He re-casts the two parts into one (moving all the Fez scenes so that they follow the interval), prunes various speeches and episodes, and adds pseudo-Elizabethan songs at several points. The production begins amid pewter mugs, ropes, lanterns, canvas and tackle (the Swan's long, protruding stage doubles very well as tavern and palace, long-boat and ship's deck), and then in comes a helmeted Prologue, offering first the opening lines to *Henry V*, and then, after a shower of buns and catcalls from the audience, those to *Titus* and *Cressida*. But no, everyone cries, we want Bess the Fair Maid, not gentle Mr. Shakespeare yet again, and so, with just a glimmer from Olivier's induction to his film of *Henry V*, things get moving. Those who are familiar with the Heywood canon (extending into well over 200 plays) will not need a start, but others might.

For them, then: Bess Bridges, the Plymouth barmaid, loves Spencer the soldier and off (not a lord, but bags of money), and he loves her (not a whore, but everyone's darling). But a lecherous swordsman insults Fair Bess. Spencer kills him and goes on the run, joining our general (Lord Essex) in the English victory in the Azores. Off to another pub goes Bess, faithfully waiting for Spencer, and there encounters bully-boy Roughman, and tames him, and how. News that Spencer is dead (no, he's not really dead) arrives to devastate our heroine, so she fits out a ship named The Negro, black sails to tell of her woe . . .

The plot goes on like this for a couple of hours, but eventually Bess and her crew arrive in the court of the King of Fez, where, after a few scenes which Heywood probably stole from some romance (they include a bed trick which brings the lecherous king back to his wife's arms), Spencer marries the unstoppable Bess. It is not unfair to Heywood to conclude that none of this is the most promising material for a Royal Shakespeare Company revival, and so Nunn's achievement—to have made the play watchable, and funny, and to have filled in some of the holes where the poetry might be—is impressive. He is fortunate of course to have in the cast one of the best theatre clowns, Joe Melia playing the king, whose own jokes—in delivery, even if he didn't write them—are funnier than most of Heywood's. (T. S. Eliot was surely right about this: Heywood does not have an acute sense of humour, and his comic moments can be hamfistedly crude.) The cast as a whole performs together with a sprightliness in speech, tempo and grouping which has been ebbing a little in some other of the RSC houses. Individual playing is excellent: Pete Postlethwaite as Roughman, for example, handles very well a part which seems a gift but one which is tricky to sustain without outstopping Pistol.

But in all what has been salvaged here, saving Heywood from himself on occasions, must be attributed to Nunn. His editing, directing and imagining are everywhere—from the simplest stage business (Bess led in procession around the theatre gangways, preceded by a set of bells which ensures that she is never out of the audience's presence) to the songs about an Englishwoman's fidelity and fortitude, which, in their low-key poignancy, help to offset some of the over-ripe jingoism about Elizabeth, England's virgin queen.

There is only one area of the play to which Nunn appears to have paid little attention, and that is (put simply) the theme of needless cruelty. The first audiences for *The Fair Maid* relished the brutalities of cock fighting, and whipping bears and bulls and setting dogs on them, so we must be careful not to invent an authorial repugnance for anything we now regard as maliciously cruel. All the same, Roughman's beating of the kitchen-maid and servants, and the savagery of the bar-room sword fights, and the threats of torture from the Spanish captain (whose "bolts and engines" will make a man gentler), and the capricious nastiness at the court of Fez, may add up to something more unsettling in the text (even if it is not fully realized) than this good-humoured production can allow.



# Life grasping life

George Steiner

WILHELM DILTHEY  
Selected Works  
Volume Five: Poetry and Experience  
Edited and translated by Rudolf A. Makkreel  
and Fritjof Rodi  
369pp. Princeton University Press. £21.90.  
01691 072973

There are writers and thinkers whose force of survival is not autonomous. They wear best in the use to which other men put their works. This has been, markedly, the case of Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911). If there is currently a certain revival of interest in Dilthey's writings, it is, principally, because of the afterlife of these writings in the early Lukács, in Gadamer and, above all, in the hermeneutics of Heidegger. Heidegger began reading Dilthey at a point when the latter's books and essays, often fragmentary and posthumous, were difficult of access and had all but passed into limbo. It was with *Sein und Zeit* that the Dilthey renaissance, so far as we can call it that, began.

The problem has not only been that of the scattered, recursive and incomplete status of Dilthey's voluminous texts: it lies in the particularities of Dilthey's thought and style. These are, in a way difficult to characterize clearly, at once abstract and contingently pragmatic, loosely impressionistic and animated with claims to the systematic. Dilthey is a figure of transition whose sensibility, whose proceedings of argument fall between the confident systematizers of the nineteenth century and the analytic, fragmentary techniques of modernity. His alertness to the instability of his situation, his awareness of the crisis of idealist and post-Romantic values are impressive. They yield moments of remarkable prevision. At the same time, however, this awareness gives to Dilthey's vision a diffuse, eclectic quality. This is reflected in his prose. Dilthey's treatises and essays contain memorable sections in which a

certain tidal motion of thoughtful rhetoric and exemplification carries the reader to assent. But often the style is one of grey prolixity, of nervous urging. These deficiencies are all too faithfully rendered by the devoted editors-translators of the six-volume selection from Dilthey's *Gesammelte Schriften*. And they are the more disheartening in a volume concerned, as this one is, with poetics and with the genius of lyric verse.

Dilthey's model and practice of literary interpretation, itself a part of a larger concept of human life as a process of understanding and self-understanding, turns on the cardinal "lived experience" (not *Lebenserfahrung* but *Erlebnis*). It is a term which Dilthey regards both as imperatively self-evident and as special to his own theory of history and of the existential-interpretive dynamics of human consciousness. The "Fragments for a Poetics" of 1907-08 (which makes up the most concentrated, suggestive text in this fifth volume), puts forward one of a number of definitions: the "lived experience"

is a reality that manifests itself immediately, that we are reflexively aware of in its entirety, that is not given and not thought. The death of a loved one involves a special structural relation to grief. This structural relation of grief to a perception or a representation, referring to an object about which I feel grief, is a lived experience. This structural nexus appears in me as a reality, and everything that it contains of reality is lived experience. This lived experience is delimited from other lived experiences by the fact that as a structured nexus of grief, of perceiving or representing what the grief is about, and of an object to which the perception refers, it represents a separate immanent teleological whole. It can be isolated within the household of my life because it belongs structurally to it as a function.

A cognitive experience (the phenomenology of apprehension and knowledge, as it will be explored by Husserl), an aesthetic experience, are also "immanent teleological entities", involving particular, yet encompassing structural, relations to their object. Endowed with a heightened capacity for suffering or for joy —

but mainly, one feels, the former — the great poet, musician or artist approaches "lived experience" *disinterestedly*. This is to say, impersonally: "Disinterestedness is thus not only a property of the aesthetic impression, but also of the lived experience of the creative artist. Thus Kant stands corrected." (Could the early T. S. Eliot, one wonders, have come across this text or similar dicta in Dilthey's aesthetics?)

The mixture of precise suggestion and opaqueness is characteristic of Dilthey. Structure, a key-word, is defined as "the relation that exists among the components of a lived experience". The specific experiential relation or, more precisely, process of relation in respect of personal grief or the act of perception or of aesthetic encounter, enters into more general structural relationships, the "nexus", and these "finally form a schematism, a context located in the course of psychological development that shapes the unity of the life-unit". An undeclared, perhaps "imagistic", psychology underlines Dilthey's scheme. As does a kind of Aristotelian functionalism, a kind of model of intentionality in which vital cognitive, emotive relationships are focused towards the utilitarian internalization of their object. Because he is able to fashion the lived experience into "a lasting mood", the major artist — Dilthey reverts talismanically to Beethoven — can "liberate others by allowing suffering to be resolved in tranquility". Structured, "life-experienced" grief is *kathartik*.

It is the concept of "structured relation" in Dilthey's aesthetics and hermeneutics which is most worth salvaging and probing. Umberto Eco's phrase "ontological structuralism" comes to mind. In the process of "lived experience", particularly in that of our perception and understanding of a work of art, of a spoken or written text, "life grasps life" (*Leben erfasst hier Leben*). Such a "grasp" is not a specialized function: human existence, where it is authentically human, is a continuous process of understanding. Dilthey's formulation is original and prophetic of the vitalist semantics and semiology of today: "meaning is a category obtained from life itself". Understanding "the other", whether he is a person or an aesthetic creation or body of thought, we not only test and sharpen our introspective access to ourselves, but give to this access an indispensable universality. "Das Verstehen ist ein Wiederfinden des Ich im Du". The formulation is arresting: "The act/process of understanding is a re-discovery, a re-cognition of the I in you." It would be difficult to put more concisely the conviction articulated in the metaphysics and ethics of intersubjectivity as expounded, today, by Lévinas. It follows that our interpretative "life-experience" of music, of art, of poetry above all, is a structured *Nachleben*, an "after-living" which is, where the encounter is a genuinely vital one, a "re-living".

Expanding on, deepening Schleiermacher's famous paradox as to the better understanding of a text by its reader than by its author, Dilthey sees in understanding an act of regenerative *poiesis*, of correspondent creation. In an absolutely radical and central figure of speech untranslatable into English, *Erleben* (life experiencing) is, for Dilthey, an *intensivum*, an intensifying augment to and construct of *Leben*, of life and of living itself. Thus the relational structures fundamental to both the creation and reception of meaning, fundamental to both the expression and re-expression of sense and emotion, are, in the widest and most charged connotations, "signs of life". No less than Peirce — there are muted but unmistakable affinities between these two explorers of meaning — Dilthey places the semiotic at the very heart of the historical and psychological condition of man.

Though blurred, or just because they were blurred and thus suggestively unstable, these concepts and Dilthey's frustrated search for a vocabulary adequate to his fulfilment, self-correcting acuties, exercised a decisive influence on the young Heidegger. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that the totalizing and existential ontology of *Being and Time* is a development of investigations to be found in the hermeneutics of Dilthey.

Consider Dilthey's insistence that the task of hermeneutics is not explication, a process flawed by the artifice of presumed objectivity, but rather a re-experiencing, a self-implication

in that "which is there", whose givenness constitutes our own presentness. "A lived experience", postulates Dilthey, "does not confront me as something perceived or represented... the reality of lived experience is there-for-me because I have a reflexive awareness of it, because I possess it immediately as belonging to me in some sense. Only in thought does it become objective." And precisely as Heidegger, such intellection and objectification are a dissociation from immediacy, a respect slide into metaphysics. Equally seminal for Heidegger is Dilthey's persuasion that a "meaning of things is already inherent in them", that the experience of *Da-sein*, of "thereness", is wholly inseparable from its meaningfulness and entails the structure of understanding. In both Dilthey and Heidegger, we find a holistic vitalism in regard to modes of phenomenality and of perception. What Heidegger did was to purge Dilthey's existential categories of their wobbly psychologism and to develop an idiom whose violence of innovation, whose radical cretiness lie well beyond Dilthey's power. But the debt is palpable and Heidegger concealed it (he tells of borrowing from a University of Marburg library the dusty, unread tomes in which, alone, Dilthey was available).

It is in the actual application of the paradigm of "lived experience" to works of literature that the difference between the two schools emerges most evidently. Heidegger's exegeses are among the most challenging in the history of reading; Dilthey's hermeneutic positions are now inert.

As for almost everyone in his time and ours, so for Dilthey, it was Goethe who stood the pivot of both theoretical and applied poetics. It was in Goethe's prodigious versatility that the whole idea of the "nexus", of congruent interactions of diverse but unified levels of understanding and formal representation, were exemplary. Anybody taking seriously with the structured and structured dynamics of the poetic imagination, of "imagined reason" both in its psychological and in its formal implications, must turn to the supreme master of "consciousness", to the naturalist, scholar, statesman who was also, and primarily, the beguiler of *Werther*, of *Iphigenie* and of *Faust*. Goethe is at the centre of Dilthey's long essay of 1887 entitled "The Imagination of the Poet: Elements of poetics". The study of "Goethe and the Poet's Imagination" of 1910, included in this selection, is an elaboration of versions which Dilthey had published in 1877 and 1905. What Dilthey sets out to express are the true relations between Goethe's life, his "life-experience", imagination and poetic works. Present

is the wonderful unity and harmony of his existence. There is hardly an incongruity or dissonance in his life as a development according to an inner law, and how simple this law is, how regularly and steadily it operates! On the basis of his intuition of the creative force of nature, Goethe proceeds to re-create the object of poetry. He shapes his poetic world and his own life in one indivisible context according to the inner lawfulness he finds there.

In contrast to this "inner lawfulness", we have Shakespeare, the supreme embodiment of the type of genius which depends on external stimuli, on the most vivid and apprehensive reactions to external reality. The Shakespearean grip on the outside and outside world is such that "he speaks of hounds as if he were a hound, of a horse as if he were a horse, of a favourite dog lying at his feet". Goethe's peculiar gift, on the contrary, "is to express the states of his own soul, the world of ideas and ideals within him". Whereas Shakespeare "constructs a person and his actions from a few dominant motives and passions", Goethe "taps many living elements" and focuses attention "completely on the inner life". The great man who speaks to us in them, all his poems and even dramas "lead us back to the great man who speaks to us in them".

It is not easy to recall that this profound assemblage of banalities and misprisions — Shakespeare's attitude toward dogs was no fust even before Caroline Spurgeon's anatomy of the relevant imagery — was composed only a few years prior to Walter Benjamin's essay on Goethe's *Elective Affinities*, or that it is contemporary both with the high point of psychoanalysis and the inception of Rorty

On January 1, 1986, two distinguished academic publishing houses, Greenwood Press, Inc. (founded in 1967) and Praeger Publishers (founded in 1950) became one. Praeger (formerly a division of CBS Educational Publishing) joins Greenwood Press' newest imprint, Quorum Books, enabling the combined entity to offer a broad academic and professional publishing programme covering the social sciences, the humanities, business, and law. The three different imprints, Greenwood Press, Praeger Publishers, and Quorum Books, can be distinguished by their respective ISBN prefixes: Greenwood Press 0-313, Praeger Publishers 0-275, Quorum Books 0-89930.

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formalism. But the essay on Hölderlin (1906, 1910), also included here, is, if anything, worse.

We learn of Hölderlin's "helpless soul" and of the "placid brooks whose soft babbling accompanied the song of his soul". Dilthey would have it that the "nexus which unites all parts of his poems" weakens in the last lyrics. In Hölderlin's lyric art, before his ethereal spirit succumbs "to the blows of fate", feeling "comes forth naked, as it were, from behind its simple designation". ("Simple" is, in this context, somewhat breathtaking.) Dilthey's perceptiveness in respect of Hölderlin's stature is real. He is among the first to intuit and pro-

claim the great influence of Hölderlin on Nietzsche. He is right in seeking to locate within syntax and rhythm the primary agencies of Hölderlin's art. But writing as he did shortly before the first adequate publication of Hölderlin's late hymns, as well as his fragments and translations from Sophocles; writing before modern scholarship had fundamentally challenged and amended the nineteenth-century *papier mâché* image of Hölderlin's character and biography, Dilthey not only committed errors and distortions; he reverted to an impressionistic-mimetic method of discourse and presentation which, often, fall decidedly below the level of a Sainte-Beuve or a Taine. What, in

1986, is gained by the translation into English of such a treatment? Dilthey's applied poetics constitute almost what is feeblest and most dated in his life-work. It is not from them that contemporary cultural historians and cultural anthropologists (such as Victor Turner or Felix Gilbert) have drawn vital suggestions. The plump typological differentiations between a Shakespeare and a Dickens, on the one hand, and a Goethe on the other, the analysis of Rousseau who "from swirling mists of dreams" condensed into palpable figures hovering images of felicity, are like archaic vestiges of Romantic bathos. Or, more precisely, they illustrate all too faithfully that

lyric-pedagogic strain in German academicism and high-journalism which climaxes in a figure such as Gundolf. They do not convey what is truly alive in Dilthey, in the incomplete but highly suggestive epistemology and general theory of understanding such as we find in his studies of the "Rise of Historical Consciousness" and in his successive definitions and descriptions of the "Problems of the Human Sciences" (Lévi-Strauss's pivotal concept of *la science de l'homme* may owe more the echo to Dilthey). It is, therefore, this particular volume which, more than any of those already published, invites the notion of misanthropic piety.

## Bruce Lincoln

GEORGES DUMÉZIL.  
*L'Oubli de l'homme et l'honneur des dieux: Esquisses de mythologie*  
380pp. Paris: Gallimard, 150 fr.  
200703169

There is much for which Georges Dumézil must rightly be praised. His erudition, perspicacity and originality are monumental; his more than any other individual, he has helped to rescue two important fields of study from the discredit into which they had fallen: comparative mythology, which had become a laughing-stock towards the end of the nineteenth century, and Indo-European studies, which were deeply tainted by Nazi racism. To these, he brought rigour and dispassion, producing results that commanded international attention and respect, even though, as we shall see, his own political orientation has given rise to argument. Most famous among Dumézil's contributions is his reconstruction of the tripartite ideology through which speakers of ancient Indo-European languages perceived the world and (occasionally) organized their society in three functional categories: 1) the sacred, represented on the human plane by priests, 2) physical force, represented by warriors, and 3) production and reproduction, represented by herdsmen, agriculturalists, merchants, artisans, and the like.

Now in his eighty-eighth year, Dumézil has written some sixty or seventy books, all serious, scholarly, and deserving of careful attention. Yet throughout his career, he has been a man of controversy. In recent years, he has pursued two complementary projects: an attempt to give definitive shape to his past as a scholar, via new, revised editions of earlier works ("to provide the most presentable corpse for the inevitable autopsy"), and an attempt to influence the future through "mythological sketches" (*esquisses de mythologie*), in which he identifies problems for further research and suggests probable lines for their solution. The current volume, like two of its predecessors, contains twenty-five such sketches, the bulk of them here being devoted to Greek and Roman myth and ritual, others to Welsh, Indic and Iranian data, or to scholarly polemic.

Modest claims notwithstanding, these "sketches" are best considered as virtuoso exercises; brief, dazzling displays of technical mastery and insight. Some (like those on the death of Heracles, the dialogue of Solon and Croesus, or the Buddha's begging bowl) treat rich and complex narratives, laying bare their structure, ideology, and relation to other materials. Others (like those on the Roman deity *Vesta*, or the war costume of Darius III) treat a seemingly minuscule or obscure bit of data, in which is revealed a world of meaning.

A case in point is the title essay, which is a study of the Roman *evocatio*: the ritual through which the Carthaginians were induced to abandon their city (Macrobios, *Saturnalia* 3.9.7-8). Dumézil focuses on one word, an adjective (*Latin prodiit*) describing the gods upon their departure. Although ambiguous in derivation and meaning, it is regularly translated as "having come forth [from Carthage]", but Dumézil argues for the alternative interpretation: "having been put forth, expelled". While possible, this rendition is usually rejected for its seeming contextual inappropriateness. Hardly "expelled", the gods rather desert their city, thus ensuring its fall. Yet, in Dumézil's view, this is the nub of the problem, for it is the goal of the *evocatio* not just to appropriate enemy deities, but to do them no harm. In reality Peter Whitaker's study is not so much a comprehensive, Brecht's like, long use of traditional forms, the song, the sonnet and the satirical narrative ballad, but a more awkward, Whitaker's own published work, those wickedly artful poems which Brecht himself called pornography. These poems progress than Whitaker allows us to see.

At its inquiry into a neglected aspect of

Roman religion, this study is a *tour de force* of the sort familiar to Dumézil's readers. One senses, however, that the category of memory bears more than academic interest for him, as evidenced in an earlier treatment of the *evocatio* in his "Discours de réception" into the Académie Française in 1979:

The past, honestly preserved and meditated upon in its grandours and its frailties, has defended more than one people from dissolution . . . . When a Roman general, at the end of a siege, attempted to seduce, to lead into his camp the city's gods, in whom the almost-vanquished nation placed its highest hope, he asked them - as in any battle - to cast fear and panic over those whom they previously protected, but in this case he added: forgetfulness . . . .

Whoever today gives himself over to the traditional works of the spirit lives in a messianic perspective: like Cardinal Bessarion, we know that our Constantinople will soon fall, and in those remaining free islands of our Aegean, we feverishly copy the manuscripts which at the time of a Renaissance, in which we also persist in believing, will reanimate somewhere in the world our Greece and our Byzantium, that is to say, the letters and sciences of Europe. That suffices to preserve in us an ardour and a confidence

resolved, just as in certain sequences from the royal installation ceremonies of ancient India.

Surely the suggestion is daring and dramatic. Yet however justified it might be (and there are details which give one pause), studying this episode without reference to the broader Herodotean narrative raises problems. Thus, Dumézil ignores Herodotus' critique of Darius and of monarchy, whereby Darius is presented as a cheat, a liar, and a would-be traitor, while the case he makes for kingship hardly rebuts the charges (tyranny, *hybris*, etc) raised by his adversaries. In effect, Herodotus casts the Persians' choice of monarchy as misguided, leading ultimately to conflict with and defeat by the democratic Greeks. Moreover, behind Herodotus' tendentiousness stands that of Darius, for the royal proclamations from which the broader Herodotean narrative derives are nothing other than Darius' (successful) attempt to mask his crimes of regicide and usurpation.

In his attempt to recover an ancient and edifying royal ideology, Dumézil thus overlooks the critical principle that every discourse is an exercise in persuasion, wherein the past

or of Indo-European thought and institutions? And why does Maurras - founder of the militantly Royalist, violently antisemitic Action Française, later ideological master to Vichy France - enter so strangely into this passage?

Although Dumézil's writings have often excited controversy, early debate was traditionally academic, focused on details of his proposals and the general legitimacy of his comparatism. More recently, attention has shifted to the ideological underpinnings of his life and work. Thus, towards the end of the 1970s, concern emerged regarding Dumézil's connections with the "New Right" of Alain de Benoist, which courted him, hoping to appropriate his views and prestige for their own purposes (mobilization of European solidarity via the Indo-European past; rejection of "Judeo-Christian" ideas as foreign to European traditions; creation of an anti-egalitarian society). For his part, Dumézil lent his name to the patronage committee of their publication, *Nouvelle école*, granted an indiscreet interview to Benoist, and received the dedication of a popularizing book (Jean Haudry's *Les Indo-européens*, 1981), in which a thinly veiled "Aryan" racism was evident. He managed to extricate himself from these embarrassments, however, by breaking with *Nouvelle école* and by making vague disclaimers in several interviews. Others, including Claude Lévi-Strauss, rallied to his defence, and the controversy abated for a time.

Interest in Dumézil's politics has been rekindled, however, by Arnaldo Momigliano, who, in article published in *Opus*, suggested that Dumézil's strained relations in the 1920s and 1930s with Henri Hubert, Marcel Mauss, and others of the school of Durkheim resulted from political differences, the Durkheimians having been of the left and Dumézil (the son of an eminent French general) of the right. In his most aggressive passage, Momigliano writes:

Neither Dumézil . . . nor his French exegetes have told us much about the political opinions of the young Dumézil. But the dedication of his first book, *Le Festin d'immortalité* [1924] to Pierre Gaxotte suffices in itself to indicate where he stood politically. Gaxotte, later a member of the Académie Française, was secretary to Maurras and chief editor of *Candide*, an organ of the extreme right: later he was among those who opposed resistance to Nazism in 1938-39. Dumézil's book of 1939, *Mythes et dieux des Germains* contains clear traces of sympathy for Nazi culture. In politics, there was evidently an abyss between Dumézil on one side and Mauss and his friends on the other.

To this, Dumézil replies spiritedly in the final "sketch" of the present volume. While acknowledging his difficulties with some of the Durkheimians, he attributes these to his desire to remain independent of any "school". Of his political views - past and present - he has this to say: "I have not made and I do not have to make disclosures regarding my philosophical, political, or aesthetic opinions, which I have held all my life to be malleable and provisional, like all that rises up out of opinions (*doxa*) that are inevitably subjective." One meets here a stone wall: he will tell us nothing, except that his ideas have changed, a stipulation which guards against any potentially embarrassing revelations.

To the two specific data exhumed by Momigliano - the matter of Gaxotte and that of *Mythes et dieux des Germains* - Dumézil had no choice but to respond more fully. Regarding the latter, there has since been a fuller exchange between Carlo Ginzburg and Dumézil in *Annales*, with inconclusive results. What is clear is that Dumézil could write in 1939 of the SA and the "dynamic economy" of the Third Reich without explicit disapprobation. Whether this reflects tacit sympathy or dispassionate inquiry is a question perhaps incapable of resolution, depending as it does upon the interpretation of silence.

Regarding Gaxotte, things are different. Dumézil relates that having been friends as students, he and Gaxotte shared an "entente particulièrement confiante" until the latter's death in 1982. His defence of the latter rests on two points: 1) Gaxotte took from Maurras only "an unflattering intellectual attachment to the dynastic principle", and 2) his advocacy of appeasement was a matter of tactics only. He thus writes: "after German rearmament of the Rhineland in 1936, . . . conscious of the military unpreparedness and the political impotence of the country, he thought that salvation

## Teamwork of a generation

### John Willett

ALBRECHT DÜMLING  
*Lasst euch nicht verführen: Brecht und die Musik*  
730pp. Munich: Kindler, DM 78.  
3463400332

Brecht had the luck to be born into a short-lived mid-European culture whose outstanding artists were curious about the possibilities of collaboration and collective work in the arts. Unlike Wagner, whom he generally spurned, he never needed to practise the one-man *Gesamtkunstwerk* but could rely on such more or less like-minded composers as Kurt Weill, Hanns Eisler, Paul Dessau and (for a few crucial years before 1933) Paul Hindemith to realize his alternative principle of "separation of the elements", according to which the words, the music, the staging and the visual design would not fuse but make distinct, parallel contributions to a common end. Central to this process was the designer Caspar Neher, a close friend from childhood on, who himself became productively associated with the same generation of theatre directors and musicians, designing their operas or ballets and even (as in the case of Weill's *Die Bürgschaft*) and a number of works by Rudolf Wagner-Regényi) writing their libretti.

This interest in collective creativity was not unique to Brecht and his circle. It was, however, he who provided a theoretical underpinning with his "Notes on the Opera" and concepts of the *Lehrstück* and the *Gesetz*, and in his practice appeared most clearly to have influenced the music of so varied a group of composers. Perhaps because of this, but certainly also because their other works were rarely performed until about ten years ago when the London Sinfonietta did their series of Weill concerts, their work was too long seen primarily in a Brechtian context; moreover there was for a time an unfortunate tendency on the part of some of us to treat them as rivals for Brecht's hand who had to be placed first, second and third. This has now altered: they have begun to look like considerable figures in their own right; there has been quite a crop of specialized literature about both Weill and Eisler as well as major editions of Hindemith's and Eisler's works and the establishment of an active Kurt Weill Foundation in New York. Given the simultaneously growing interest in the wider implications of Brecht's theatre there seems every reason to pull the scattered evidence together and make a comprehensive study of his role in the music of his time.

This is what Albrecht Dümling has done in his *Lasst euch nicht verführen*, and its usefulness to anybody concerned with this whole area is unquestionable. Setting out from the view that "unlike such writers as Goethe, Heine and Hofmannsthal, whom musicians previously used to favour, Brecht influenced music not just stylistically but in its generic scope", he has expounded a great wealth of material clearly and logically so as to follow Brecht from his beginnings as a singer of his own words with simple tunes which he devised, imitated or borrowed for himself, on through his collaborations, first with the little-known Franz Brünner, a pupil of Egon Petri whom he met early in his second year in Berlin, then with Weill, Hindemith and Eisler, then from about 1944 on with Dessau and more marginally with Wagner-Regényi, Von Elbner and other com-

posers.

The book's title - taken from a poem of 1919 which Brecht put into *Mahagonny* some eight years later - refers to his fear of being seduced by the insidious beauty of great music, and so becoming diverted from the harsh realities of life and death on this earth; Lenin once expressed something very similar apropos of the work of Beethoven. In Dümling's opinion this was the key to Brecht's ideas about orchestration, about trained singers (particularly tenors - his own register, to judge from the two or three known recordings), about the primacy of the words, and the need of music to criticize, mock, alienate, undermine, expose and subvert. These are features which ran through much of his dealings with music and musicians, who seem to have found him at once inspiring and infuriating to work with.

For all the book's great length, its argument is not difficult to follow, and it is simple to locate the sections allotted to the more important individual works. These are dealt with analytically, with musical examples, brief accounts of structure and content, and details of original performances and critical reception. The great mass of material provided is mostly drawn from published sources, though the author has had a number of first-hand informants - notably H. H. Stuckenschmidt, Erwin Faber, the late Ernst Busch and the Eisler family in Vienna - while he finishes the book with three interviews with Hans Werner Henze and two other younger composers who have learnt something from Brecht and his approach to music.

This does not stop it from having much that is new to tell even the supposedly informed reader. Weill, for instance, emerges as closer to Brecht in his political views than is often supposed, contributing to left-wing cabarets and putting his flat at the disposal of the "Marxist Workers' School" before 1933, then in emigration making public his opposition to the Un-American Activities Committee hearings; likewise the ups and downs of Brecht's relationship with Eisler are, interestingly traced. We learn too of Hindemith's delight at the idea of writing an opera with Brecht in 1930; of the intended twinning of *Der Jasager* and *Die Massnahme* that same year; of Weill's apparent intention in 1928 to set Brecht's splendid long poem about the world middle-weight champions, and many other things.

Stravinsky enters the story as an admirer of Eisler's *Galileo* music and a protester (in one of his rare political gestures) against that composer's deportation from the United States in the winter of 1947-8. Eisler's extraordinary hope of establishing serialism as an accepted part of Communist music under Stalin is also well dealt with, while the two great East German operatic controversies of the 1950s are illuminatingly discussed: the cases of the Brecht-Dessau *Lucullus* and of Eisler's mastery but supposedly demoralizing libretto for a never-to-be-written *Faust* opera. In the end, it is true, Dümling emerges as an Eisler man, but generally his account is balanced, and he avoids the common error of thinking that Brecht ever wanted to work exclusively with one composer.

However, there are a number of questions which he does not tackle at all. Some of these are small but nagging ones, like the provenance of the tune Brecht called "L'Étendard de la pitie", or of the Salvation Army songs in *Happy End*; others, like the exact allocation of responsibility for the *Lehrstück* form and the

notion of "gestic" art, are rather more fundamental. But it is generally a mistake to rely on Eisler's memory, which was often erratic, while in Brecht's case one needs to take more care about dating those works which were revised (like the poem "Of Poor BB") over a period of years. Titles of poems and songs too need checking: what, for instance, is Brecht's "Gedanken über die rote Fahne", which Eisler is alleged to have set? Again the questionable points are too many to list, but it seems particularly misleading to suggest that Neher terminated his friendship with Brecht over the Salzburg Festival project, or that the image of *Mahagonny* bore any relation to Fascism, while the "Was ist eine Dietrich gegen eine Aktie?" speech in *The Threepenny Opera* was surely there from the start.

It would also have been useful to have had more about the contractual arrangements with respect to the music: not so much about the division of the royalties (though that would have been interesting) as about the obligation or otherwise to use particular composers' work. Eisler has come off short in this respect, since some of his finest settings - *Die Massnahme*, for instance, and the songs to *Die Mutter* - can legally be ignored or replaced by inferior local substitutes. Dessau too has suffered from this, particularly in this country with regard to *Mother Courage*, though the book suggests that Brecht had arranged otherwise. And just why were other works simply dropped, as *The Little Mahagonny* was after 1927, or Roger Sessions's *Lucullus* after his performance in 1947?

A different approach to so fascinating an unusual subject might in the long run have been more economical and in some ways more founder. For Dümling has made Brecht the centre of the story, with the results that his composers remain more or less peripheral; he hangs their cited works one by one on what seems primarily a biography of the playwright. Thus their own writings about music, opera, theatre and so on, are surprisingly referred to, though both Weill and Eisler were critics of considerable originality whose status opinions can be interestingly compared with those of Brecht. It would perhaps have been better then to ask what it was that the composers of that generation (born between 1890 and 1905) got from Brecht that so characterized their music - not just their Brecht settings but their treatment of other texts and, in some respects, their whole approach to their art, why it stimulated them and why they were well equipped to make use of it.

## Voices of a lifetime

### Philip Brady

PETER WHITAKER  
*Brecht's Poetry: A critical study*  
284pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press, £19.50.  
0198155417

Bertolt Brecht, novelist and short-story writer, film-maker and musician, theorist of radio and of photography, has left ample evidence of a quite exceptional range of creative gifts. Thirty years after his death, however, much of that evidence remains in the shadows - thirty years of unabated critical attention have in fact done more for Brecht the man of theatre than for the man of many brilliant gifts. "Brechtian" means (if it means anything) a kind of theatre and little beyond that. Faced with this dominant public image, we tend to forget the most obvious, singular evidence of Brecht's non-theatrical gifts: alongside the seven volumes of plays in his collected works there are no less than five volumes of poems.

Not that Brecht's mastery as a poet is in doubt, it is simply underexposed. The general outlines of that mastery are clear, in particular the emergence of a poetry of almost emblematic vividness, political in the broadest sense, a sense disguised in understatement and deceptively open endings. But the assurance of Brecht's mature poetry has never been seen in the context of his poetry as a whole - Peter Whitaker's study is the first to aim at a comprehensive account of the poetry from its hectic beginnings towards the close of the First World War to Brecht's final years in East Berlin.

Given the narrow field of vision of much that has hitherto been written about Brecht's poetry, an attempt at an overview, especially one that proceeds through copious quotation, must be welcome. Using Brecht's own published collections as markers, Whitaker, aware that German critics have been inclined to dwell on the overheard beginnings, charts a different and more rewarding course towards his cooler

maturity: through the ironic, battling poems of the late 1920s, the extraordinarily rich range of warning voices in the late 1930s collection, the Svendborg poems, to the spare, lucid poems of his last years.

Comprehensiveness of this order exacts its own price. Brecht wrote well over a thousand poems and Whitaker discusses a considerable number individually, while referring to many more. The inescapable logic of Brecht's changes of style and of his maturing ideas means that a chronological approach is perhaps natural, but the risk, and it is a risk avoided here, is a somewhat relentless progression from poem to poem. At several points, a general contours, the sense of a cumulative achievement, are lost to sight. Moreover, although Whitaker's close reading can yield highly sensitive accounts of Brecht's poems, means, too many poems are represented by précis of their content, too many poems seem to be "analysed", "explained", "argued", whose fact analysis and explanation are often not so much what the poem does as what the reader adds to Brecht's pregnant elliptical structures.

Comprehensiveness can also bring its own brand of narrowness. Constrained by space and perhaps by the doctoral thesis in which the book originated, Whitaker allows the poetry to inhabit a kind of vacuum, almost bereft of context, divorced from other poets and only rarely set against Brecht's work in other languages.

In reality Peter Whitaker's study is not so much a comprehensive, Brecht's like, long use of traditional forms, the song, the sonnet and the satirical narrative ballad, but a more awkward, Whitaker's own published work, those wickedly artful poems which Brecht himself called pornography. These poems progress than Whitaker allows us to see.

## Shaping the past and the future

### Bruce Lincoln

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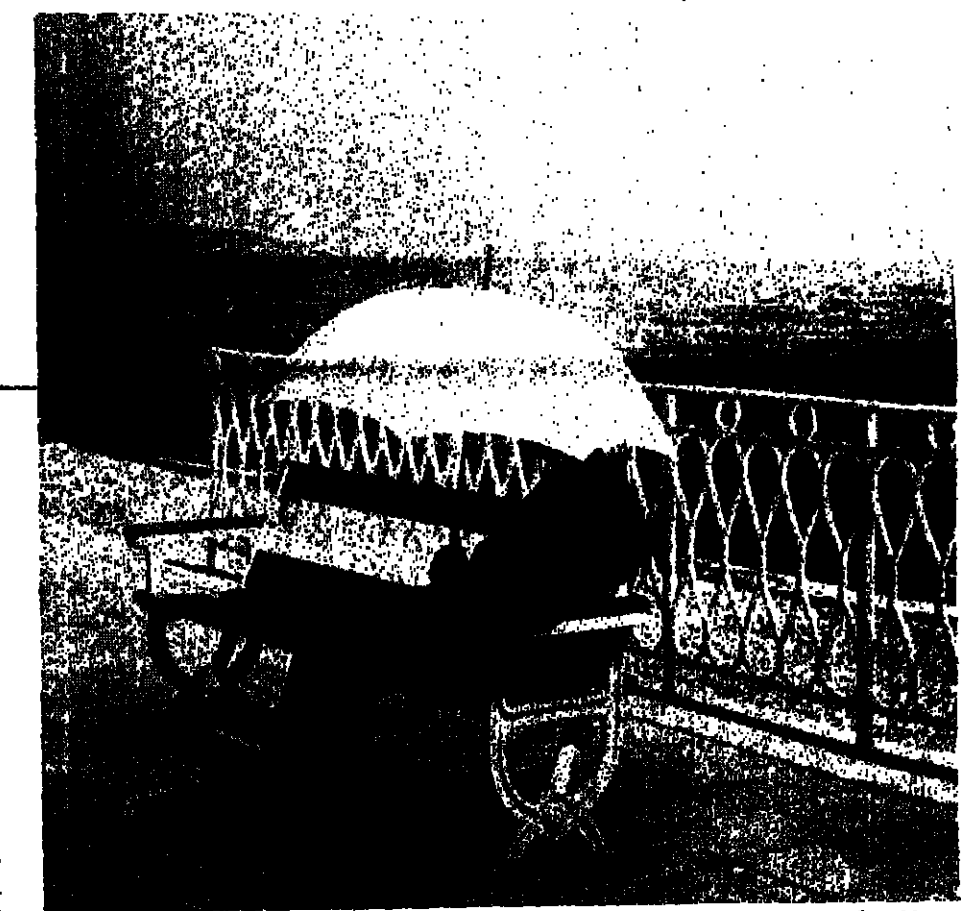
There is much for which Georges Dumézil must rightly be praised. His erudition, perspicacity and originality are monumental; his more than any other individual, he has helped to rescue two important fields of study from the discredit into which they had fallen: comparative mythology, which had become a laughing-stock towards the end of the nineteenth century, and Indo-European studies, which were deeply tainted by Nazi racism. To these, he brought rigour and dispassion, producing results that commanded international attention and respect, even though, as we shall see, his own political orientation has given rise to argument. Most famous among Dumézil's contributions is his reconstruction of the tripartite ideology through which speakers of ancient Indo-European languages perceived the world and (occasionally) organized their society in three functional categories: 1) the sacred, represented on the human plane by priests, 2) physical force, represented by warriors, and 3) production and reproduction, represented by herdsmen, agriculturalists, merchants, artisans, and the like.

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A case in point is the title essay, which is a study of the Roman *evocatio*: the ritual through which the Carthaginians were induced to abandon their city (Macrobios, *Saturnalia* 3.9.7-8). Dumézil focuses on one word, an adjective (*Latin prodiit*) describing the gods upon their departure. Although ambiguous in derivation and meaning, it is regularly translated as "having come forth [from Carthage]", but Dumézil argues for the alternative interpretation: "having been put forth, expelled". While possible, this rendition is usually rejected for its seeming contextual inappropriateness. Hardly "expelled", the gods rather desert their city, thus ensuring its fall. Yet, in Dumézil's view, this is the nub of the problem, for it is the goal of the *evocatio* not just to appropriate enemy deities, but to do them no harm. In reality Peter Whitaker's study is not so much a comprehensive, Brecht's like, long use of traditional forms, the song, the sonnet and the satirical narrative ballad, but a more awkward, Whitaker's own published work, those wickedly artful poems which Brecht himself called pornography. These poems progress than Whitaker allows us to see.

At its inquiry into a neglected aspect of



A detail from Pierre Brassat's photograph, "Man with white sunshade", Menton, 1935. It is reproduced from *Into the Thirties: Style and design 1927-1934* by Klaus-Jürgen Sembach (1979). Thames and Hudson, £8.95. 05002741777.

Memory here appears as the last, best defence against chaos. The apocalyptic flavour is unmistakable: barbarians at the gates and decadence within, the fate of civilization hanging on a faithful few. The vision (parable?) evokes other *Götterdämmerungen*, and prompts many questions. What is it, precisely, that must be preserved and remembered? Who are the menacing enemies? The amnesiac many? And who the mindful, messianic "we"?

Dumézil discussed only one other ancient datum in his "Discours de réception", and this also receives a chapter in *L'Oubli de l'homme*: the story of a constitutional debate held prior to the accession of Darius the Great, in which certain Otanes championed democracy; Megabyzoz, oligarchy; and Darius himself, monarchy (Herodotus 3.80-82). Whereas most consider this a Greek rhetorical exercise in Persian garb, Dumézil demurs, noting that the hierarchic rank of each functionally defined stratum in a tripartite society varied inversely with its size, priests being a small minority and warriors a somewhat larger group, while the third function formed the great mass of the population.

With this in mind, he suggests that the Herodotean debate presents an Indo-Iranian ritual sequence as misunderstood by a fifth-century Greek. In Iranian terms, he argues, modes of government were not at issue, but rather social strata, Otanes representing not democracy, but the masses of the third function, and Megabyzoz the élite few of the first, two functions. Kingship then emerges as the transcendent institution in which all strata were integrated and the tensions among them

enters discussion always for reasons of the present. This holds for Herodotus, it holds for Darius, it holds for Indo-Iranian rituals, and it also holds for Georges Dumézil, to judge from his meditations on Darius elsewhere:

Herodotus tells how . . . Darius and the others deliberated on the respective merits of régimes: popular, aristocratic, monarchic. They have had many imitators, down to Montesquieu and beyond, and this is not the place to add a variant to that rhetorical collection. Nor must we decide between Joffre's Order of the Day after the Battle of the Marne: "The Republic can be proud of the soldiers she has prepared," and the amendment Charles Maurras proposed for this decree: "For forty-three years, Alsace-Lorraine has been Queen of France." Nor must we examine whether frequent changes of régime renew or injure nations. In November 1918, during the night that was to be the last of the war, the batteries of my regiment went into the line . . . . During a halt, some comrades and I approached a half dozen prisoners [being taken to the rear] and we set to chatting in our bad German. Uncharitably, one of us chastened them for their pending defeat: from other Frenchmen, they learned that Wilhelm II and the crown prince had fled to Holland. Then one became insolent and, in French, buried in my face: "You - Republic, Emperor, King, Republic! We - Emperor." That was his way of crying at me: Caramba! I admired this and did not reply: our column had already departed. I have often thought afterward of this aborted academic colloquium on a roadside in Lorraine. Three régimes have succeeded, on one side as on the other. And where are we?

Where, indeed? More specifically, where do Dumézil's own opinions on "the respective merits of régimes" lie, and how deep does his admiration run for the speech of the German prisoner? Moreover, have his personal views influenced his reading of the Herodotean text

The 1930s



-if it was still possible - required that one gain time to rectify all of that".

This will not do. First, it is clear that Gaxotte was fully and intensely loyal to Maurras and his ideas. Consider, for instance, his statement of January 1941, in the Vichy-published *Almanach de la France nouvelle*: "Tomorrow, Maurras will be read in all the schools, and children will recite the pages he has written as they recite Racine or Bossuet. He will remain for us the master who rediscovered the great laws that make states prosperous and powerful: it is in [his] principles that France seeks her salvation today." Similarly slavish sentiments - hardly limited to the question of "dynastic principle" - appear into the 1960s. Second, as early as three years before rearmament of the Rhineland, Gaxotte already favoured appeasement, not for reasons of tactics but those of ideology. Hitler being the scourge of his own enemies: Marxists and Jews. Consider these early excerpts from his leader column in *Je suis partout*, a scabrously reactionary publication of which he was chief Editor from its inception until June 1937:

The International is dead: Marxism is moribund. Hitler, who has no love for France, has at least done this service for us and for the world. The consolidation of Fascism, its success and its social works had already shaken orthodox socialism. But it is Hitler who struck the decisive blow (August 26, 1933). France is pursuing the policy of the Bolsheviks and the refugees. . . . It is the trio of Leon Blum, Jules Moch, and Oreste Rosenfeld who lead the Quai d'Orsay [and think that] France ought to avenge the Jews of Germany, and that young Frenchmen ought to take up rifles because Hitler booted the little cousins of Blum, Moch and Rosenfeld in the *derrière*. One has to be blind not to see that the coalition of France, Israel, and the Soviets is not a league of peace. It is a disquieting coalition, it is the crusade of the Internationals, it is the hope of universal pillage (September 15, 1934).

For one who values memory so highly, Dumézil is peculiarly amnesiac concerning these matters. Were he just making the best case for a flawed, but departed friend, one might forgive his distortions of the record. But Gaxotte entered the discussion only when Momigliano, seeking to uncover the political views and associations of Dumézil's youth,

called attention to the dedication of his doctoral thesis to one Pierre Gaxotte. In defending Gaxotte, Dumézil thus defends himself, by minimizing the extent to which he and his friends were influenced by Maurras and the Action Française.

Alongside his journalistic endeavours, Gaxotte wrote popular volumes of history, in which he constructed the past along openly Maurrasian lines. Much as Herodotus saw in Darius what he wanted to see and was prepared to see, so Gaxotte's ideological orientation shaped his treatment of such figures as Louis XIV and Robespierre, to cite the most obvious examples. And although the scholarship of Dumézil is infinitely more disciplined, rigorous and carefully reasoned than that of Gaxotte, one may still ask whether his studies are not coloured by similar ideological predispositions. How relevant, for instance, to Dumézil's discussion of memory is Maurras's dictum: "Democracy is forgetting"? Among other themes worth exploring are Dumézil's view of the lower social orders ("the third function"), the interrelations of religious and political au-

thority, and the "enemy within" - i.e., figures like Loki or Gullveig, who threaten their adoptive societies, much like the four classes of "aliens" (Jews, Protestants, Masons and mages) who so obsessed Maurras. Most important is the question of the tripartite ideology in its social application. For beyond his unexceptionable identification of three functionally defined strata, Dumézil posits as the Indo-European ideal that the society built from these strata ought to be both rigidly hierarchic and harmoniously integrated. Is it accident that this has a familiar ring? Momigliano suggested possible influence from Fascist ideas of the "corporate state", noting that the first exposition of Dumézil's theory came in 1938. Closer than this, however, is Maurras's "integral nationalism", where in one finds the same contradictory conjunction of hierarchy and harmony, as well as the vision of kingship as the institution which ensures this happy (if improbable) combination. The similarity to the Indo-European system of Georges Dumézil is considerable and, I am persuaded, not just coincidental.

good on the inconsistencies of the Athenian attitude to women, and deserves quotation on Isocrates: "his theories lacked any incentive to serious thought. They were therefore eminently suited to become the standard pattern for organized higher education."

Unlike their Roman counterparts the exponents of Greek literature are denied the luxury of quotation in the original, which puts them at some disadvantage. Nevertheless Oliver Taplin has some interesting insights on Homer and wields a convincing scepticism against the notion of consistent historicity on any level. Jasper Griffin delivers salutary blasts against structuralist and other interpretations of Greek myth and does his best to make Hesiod seem less boring than he is. E. L. Bowie labours manfully at the thankless task of acting as guide to the shattered ruins of Greek lyric.

On drama Peter Levi shows great feeling for Sophocles, but one misses something on the evidence of Athenian drama for ideas about democracy and empire. The historians are well discussed by Murray, who offers cogent explanations of the paucity of royal histories among the later Greeks.

M. L. West's treatment of Heraclitus and Parmenides is excellent as far as it goes; perhaps more might have been said about their real or at least potential importance in the history of logic. Julia Annas's chapter on classical philosophy is particularly successful. She does not offer a mere impersonal summary of doctrines, but contrives to put across a strong impression of the philosophers as living men with minds. Robert Parker on Greek religion makes illuminating use of the concept of "embedded religion". Finally, John Boardman is expert in imparting information on styles and influences in art and architecture, the nature of patronage and its consequences for the working artist.

The Hellenistic world lends itself more readily to synthesis. Simon Price delineates the various ways in which the phenomenon of Hellenistic kingship impinged on the life of the cities. Jonathan Barnes is lucid on philosophy and science. Most rewarding is Robin Lane-Fox, who brings the world of Hellenistic scholarship and literature to life, with fascinating sidelights, including forestry commission Christmas trees in Ptolemaic Egypt and the belief that "jogging was . . . good for sexual diseases". He is sensitive to the virtues of Hellenistic poetry and unlike other contributors is prepared to acknowledge at least briefly the importance of the generic element in the composition of ancient verse.

The treatment of Roman republican history displays some inconsistency of approach. Michael Crawford on early Rome and Italy ruthlessly restricts himself to general trends, consigning almost all individuals to oblivion, while Miriam Griffin handles the age of Cicero much more in terms of personalities. Elizabeth Rawson addresses the fundamental question of Roman foreign policy: did Rome conquer the world because she was aggressive, or because she was afraid it would bite her? David Stockton on the early empire exercises firm control

over the mass of material available on Augustus and also deals well with his successors. The historical framework of the rest of the empire is succinctly dismissed by Nicholas Purcell's preamble to a chapter on the arts of government, the most important in the entire book. He analyses three personae which shape imperial relations with their subjects: the magistrate, the soldier and the head of a household. Intervention is shown always to have been arbitrary, haphazard and superficial. His conclusion is that the empire never developed a bureaucracy or civil service; equestrian officials and even freedmen were no more than senators to possess professional expertise. His arguments are convincing, but one is a bit more baffled than ever that this shambles has fared so well.

Latin literature is in the main well served better perhaps than Greek. Peter Brown gives the reader the feel of Plautus and Terence. R. G. M. Nisbet's treatment of Lucretius is particularly fine, while Oliver Lyne is interesting on the role of poets under the Augustan régime and the nature and functions of patronage. Virgil too is set firmly in his social and political context by Griffin. Richard Jenkinson's crude dismissal of Statius' *Silvae* is appreciated the virtues and vices of Lucan and rightly stresses the affinity between Juvenal and Tacitus. On the historians Andrew Little is largely reliable. But Tacitus' readiness to put the case for opponents of Roman aggression is already manifest in Caesar's *Bellum Gallicum* perhaps shows only that Rome was as egotistically aggressive that her victims could be allowed their say, since nothing they said could possibly matter. Donald Russell deals clearly with the various other uses of prose.

Roger Ling picks his way through the chronological quicksands of Hellenistic and Roman art, presenting a useful synthesis of styles and trends, and is also imaginative and stimulating on applied arts and crafts in Roman life - but if it be philistine to prefer gourmet dishes and Spanish dancing-girls to a poor reading with Pliny, then he for Philistia "serious" art and architecture are treated by R. J. A. Wilson in a wide-ranging and provocative chapter which endeavours among other things to sort out what is genuinely Roman, and is properly enthusiastic about the brick-faced concrete. The final chapter, an envoi by Henry Chadwick, is admirably based on such questions as the growth of the Church, the relationship between Church and State, and whether the Church can be blamed for the fall of the empire. It also contains some interesting observations on linguistic developments under the late empire.

In short, this book covers almost everything. No contribution is less than adequate, and many are original, entertaining and well written. At £25 it is excellent value for money. Yet it may languish unread, because the general reader might be reluctant to spend £25 on a book, however deserving, and because it is heavy that one cannot read it without the assistance of a lecture, desk or slave. But if it proves to be so, it will be a very great pity.

## When patriotism is enough

Geoffrey Best

JEAN-JACQUES BECKER  
*The Great War and the French People*  
Translated by Arnold Pomerans  
333pp. Leamington: Berg. £25 (paperback, 1985).  
0907582303  
PIERRE MESSMER and ALAIN LARCAN  
*Les écrits militaires de Charles de Gaulle: Essai d'analyse thématique*  
500pp. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France. 200f.  
215091699

"Why", asks Jean-Jacques Becker at the outset of *The Great War and the French People*, "were the French so ready to make sacrifices in 1914 when they had been so unprepared for them in the past and would manifest even less of a spirit of sacrifice in the future?" And in closing his account he reverts to the same comparison: "The unbowed France of 1918 heralded the hunched France of 1940." One would hardly have expected such guts, perseverance and doggedness from a people "who were said, somewhat glibly, to be easy-going, fun-loving and without ideals . . .". Statistics, so far as they go, show that France had a more painful war than any other major belligerent: the highest proportions of mobilized, dead and maimed in the north-east, caused by battles, fortifications, and the deliberate devastations made

by the retreating enemy.

But wars are not often the unitary, homogeneous experiences they appear to be in tabular statements. A war wide-ranging enough to become described, rightly or wrongly, as a world war and going on at full industrial tilt for more than four years, can be broken down into phases and zones which make it look on closer inspection more like a cluster of lesser wars than one big one. What can be done on the international level can of course be done on the national level too. Region, class, timing, season, character and so on, each made its mark, so that when you get down among the human infinitesimals, each individual's war was unique. Somewhere between the personal micro-pole of truth and the collective macro-pole lie rich possibilities of assessment. This book promises to be a landmark in the science of how to do it.

That Professor Becker should be the historian to do it for his own country will surprise nobody who knows his earlier works, almost all of them to do with the opening of the war, and one of them, *1914, Comment les Français sont entrés dans la guerre*, already a landmark for its patient unravelling of the mixtures of motives and emotions which lay behind and within the public ballyhoo of August 1914. The demythologizing of the *Union Sacrée* there begun is here brought to the interesting conclusion that what kept the French nation together through even the gloomiest days of 1917 and the most menacing ones of 1918 was not the *Union Sacrée*'s exalted super-nationalism, but instead

some rather simple and primitive patriotism, a patriotism by no means exclusive of grumbling about prices, insistence on eating well, depression of spirits, continuing class hostilities, and in 1918 even the resurrection of ostensibly revolutionary politics; patriotism so profound and even subconscious that, mixed with internationalist and pacifist incompatibles in some leftist minds, it ultimately proved stronger than they and determined the vast majority of the French people that whatever else they might do among themselves and however much they might long for the end of the war, they would not end it defeated.

Becker's road to these conclusions runs through the variety of sectors of French society for which he has found what he considers to be properly weighty primary sources (eg, prefectural reports, censorship studies, school-teachers' surveys), topped up with sketches of how the causes and progress of the fighting were appraised by three most significant opinion-forming groups: the churches, the teachers, and "writers". These chapters (two of them by helping hands - Genevieve Colin and Annette Becker) are relatively slight and commonplace, promising more than they perform and containing incidentally so disturbing an error as to call Duhamel's 1918 collection of sketches, *Civilisation 1914-1917*, "a novel".

Readers inclined to extend their reflections about French national morale and mentality into the years of the Second World War and since will find good grist for their mills in the exhaustive *Essai d'analyse thématique* handsomely put together by Pierre Messmer and Alain Larcane. (No clue as to which bits are by whom.) What they have done is to extract and to classify, under the heads of Thought and Action, The Historian, The Professional Expert, The Sociologist and Moralist, and The Military Writer, what they judge to be the more significant of de Gaulle's ideas, sometimes citing his own words, sometimes paraphrasing or sketching them in their own words.

always elaborately annotating and explicating them with an abundance of cross-references. The quantity of writings, the breadth of learning and the quality of thought and expression are very striking. De Gaulle was a cultivated and intellectual soldier as well as a formidable statesman.

He was also a tremendous nationalist, though the word used here is the less disturbing one of patriot. "Sans discussion possible, ses valeurs suprêmes sont l'homme et sa patrie." But patriotism is not enough in a description of de Gaulle and, one might add, of the solid central strands of French society and mentality he grandly represented. Patriotism of itself makes no special claims about its *patrie*'s peculiar qualities and world significance; nationalism does. Patriotism is not incompatible with internationalism and universalism; nationalism is. What de Gaulle was patriotic for was not just the nation of the French Revolution but also, as dozens of pages here testify, the empire of Napoleon. The nation he so courageously helped to survive the battering of the First and the bruising of the Second World War was, for him, an object of exclusive attachment and what it is not too much to call religious adoration.

Exactly how the nature and extent of his contribution to the continuing story of France will be assessed in the long run, it is still too early to say; but all the signs so far are that, where questions of status and security are concerned, de Gaulle stood for a people more at one in that regard and perhaps more careless of external opinion than is common among developed democracies. An offshore observer from the country he correctly diagnosed as no more than imperfectly European can only view this French phenomenon with a mixture of disquiet, puzzlement and envy: disquiet for obvious reasons enough, puzzlement and envy because it suggests a depth and strength of national solidarity - unless appearances are delusory - Britons seem somewhat to have lost. Which brings us back to Becker.

## Irrational realities

K. G. Robbins

J. N. MILLER  
*Norman Angell and the Futility of War: Peace and the public mind*  
163pp. Macmillan. £27.50.  
033374983

Sir Norman Angell remains the only former cowboy to have been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. His claim to fame, however, does not derive from the youthful years he spent on a Californian ranch. It rests primarily on his book - *The Great Illusion* (1909) - which brought him into public prominence. Aged thirty-seven when it was published, Angell had behind him an informal education, travel and journalism. He had become manager of the *Financial Times* and had been driven to reflect on the "realities" of international relations as a result of his experiences as a newspaperman. *The Great Illusion* became an immense and worldwide publishing success. Its author was propelled into a public role by Lord Esher and its message evoked an enthusiastic response from a diverse collection of intellectuals, bankers and businessmen. Here was a "new pacifism" in which, apparently, reason, self-interest and morality were all fused to show that, whatever might have been the case in the past, war was now the great illusion.

The events of 1914 inevitably shattered the hopes of Angell's followers and, briefly, checked his pen. It was widely supposed that he had argued that war had become impossible to the case - but in fact he had made no such claim. The experience of the press, not least his connection with Northcliffe, made him only too aware of the "non-rational" elements in behaviour of societies and states. His own analysis, however, concentrated upon removing the deeply embedded belief that war could actually benefit a victor. The author remained convinced, despite attacks on details, that *The Great Illusion* was not itself an illusion.

Perhaps aided by hypochondria and a propensity for nocturnal walks, Angell was extremely productive over his long lifetime. His last substantial work, *Defence and the End of the World*, was published in 1958 and, although Angell was still past his prime, he was still passionately interested in the public mind and in the human aspects of war and peace in his

ly, either on fundamental issues or upon particular international developments. For a time between the wars, though never with much enthusiasm, Angell became a Member of Parliament. He won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1933. *The Great Illusion* itself had several sequels in which he modified certain points but never altered his fundamental position.

A full-scale analysis of his writings would require a substantial treatise and hitherto, apart from theses written at Ball State University, Indiana, where his papers are housed, little has been written specifically on him. Perhaps that reflects a certain disdain among academics for a man who thought that there were better vantage-points from which to examine the public mind than universities. J. D. B. Miller's short, though expensive, book is therefore particularly welcome, though it is poised a little uneasily between being a contribution to history and a contribution to international relations. After a clear initial account of Angell's life and associates, it moves on to consider the circumstances in which *The Great Illusion* was written and the debate which it engendered. Angell, Miller suggests, was wrong in his early view that the State's importance would diminish because of the growth of transnational links, but argues that much of the criticism to which he was subjected was beside the point. Indeed, in general terms, Miller finds Angell to have been more often right than wrong in his analysis of international politics all through his career. Finally, several chapters assess the relevance of Angell's work on contemporary issues of war and peace. The author admits that there are "serious objections to taking Angell seriously as a scholar" but argues that, even so, he was a lucid and logical writer.

Miller's reflective book should help us to recognize that, despite his flaws, Angell was a pioneer in the systematic study of international relations and someone from whom it is still possible to gain useful insights. He rightly stresses that the meticulous analysis of particular episodes was not Angell's specialism. His strength lay in uncovering "major truths" about the underlying forces in relationships between states, even if at times the simplicity of his perception alarms the academic mind. It was not, in any event, an academic accolade that Angell sought but rather the capacity to put across his views in a form that would exert public influence. Professor Miller is to be thanked for resurrecting a remarkable man and a remarkable career. He has done so, too, without any resort to the jargon of international relations which Sir Norman so much disliked.

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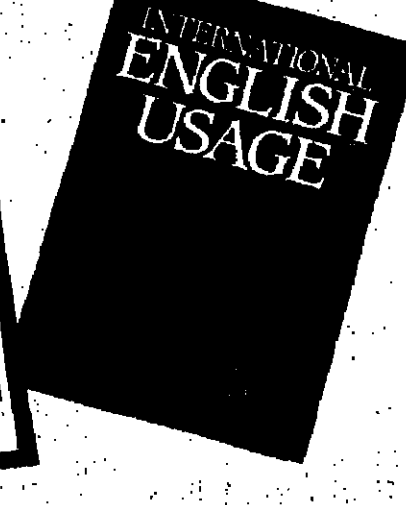
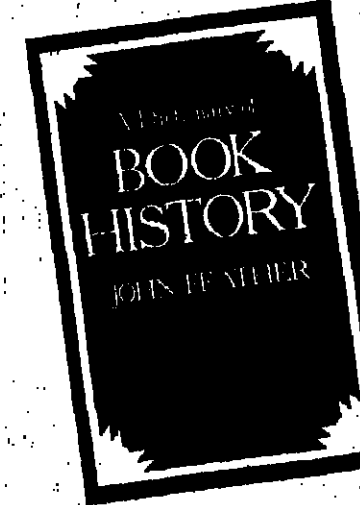
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## A centre of attraction

Peter Fawcett

AUGUSTE ANGLÈS  
André Glède et le premier groupe de La Nouvelle  
Revue Française: L'Agencier 1911-1912  
617pp. Paris: Gallimard, 195fr.  
207070589

Auguste Anglès's history of the pre-1914 Nouvelle Revue Française must rank among the outstanding works of French literary criticism in recent years. A profound debt of gratitude is therefore owed both to his friends and colleagues and to his publishers for the appearance of this second volume, some eight years after the first – the only book he ever published – and three years after its author's untimely death. A third and final volume is promised later this year. Meanwhile, a comprehensive selection of his articles on literature, travel and politics has also just been published under the title *Circumnavigations* by the Presses Universitaires de Lyon.

Anglès claimed to be a critic without method. In an important letter to Isabelle Rivière, he described how he began by collating the various pieces of information he had gathered from different correspondences to form a kind of chronological jigsaw; then, in at least three successive drafts, he tried to shape his material and infuse it with life and movement; next, a first typed draft would show up the deficiencies of his manuscript; finally, a

second typed draft would, after correction, serve as the basis for his definitive text.

It was Anglès's good luck, as well as his misfortune, that the protagonists of his story were such insatiable letter-writers. If Glède sometimes seems inferior to his innumerable correspondents, it should be remembered that he might write up to eight letters on the trot. Such epistolary fecundity is something to which we are unaccustomed nowadays. Anglès suggests that the contents of the *NRF* itself, which he subjects to the same minute analysis, are also best regarded as a continuation of the dialogue between the members of the group.

These were years during which there was a move away from the initial desire, in Jean Schlumberger's phrase, to "clean up the Augean stables" of contemporary literature towards a search for new artistic forms, particularly in drama and the novel. Glède wanted the review to become less a polemical tool and more a centre of attraction, with quality as its only criterion. Not the least of the group's paradoxes was that, despite their interest in reviving the novel, none of them proved capable of writing one, nor even of recognizing one when it was beneath their noses, as was the case, notoriously, with *Du Côté de chez Swann*.

Of the original six members, Ruyters and Drouin began to fall by the wayside and to be replaced by two intrusive newcomers in the shape of Thibaudet and Suarès. Glède, while struggling with *Les Caves du Vatican*, continued to dance attendance on the irascible

Claudel. Copeau had his first sobering experience of practical theatre with his adaptation of *The Brothers Karamazov*. On December 11, 1911, Jacques Rivière became secretary of the review and it might surprise many to learn that, shortly after his appointment, the total number of subscribers stood at a mere 552.

Anglès is especially sensitive to slight shifts in temperature or in position on the field of play which turn out to be of long-term significance. One of his favourite terms is "mue", in the sense of moulting or sloughing a skin, and he is adept at picking out the group's own key-words. His fondness for geographical imagery invites us to imagine him crossing and recrossing his chosen terrain until every bump or hillock is accounted for. He has a gift for the well-chosen phrase – the "milky way" of Symbolism, Thibaudet as a "mushroom bed" of ideas, Claudel "firing off cannonballs" indiscriminately from his consulate in Frankfurt. He views the creatures of his investigation generally with an amused indulgence, treating the Variot incident, for example, which nearly led to a duel at the end of 1911, as a farce. But he occasionally assumes the role of a Dostoevskian Grand Inquisitor as when, in a marvelous passage, he tracks down an instance of Glède's *mauvaise foi* in a journal entry relating to Claudel.

It may be regretted that Anglès did not live to put the finishing touches to this volume. Had he done so, doubtless some of the *longueurs* and repetitions would have been removed and

the cuts, which affect primarily the day-to-day account of 1912, avoided. However, there is compensation to be found in the verve and spontaneity of much of the writing and such notes as a marginal reminder to himself to adopt a more satirical tone in respect of certain platitudes of the period. The volume ends with two magnificent essays assessing the contributions to the review of the irrepressible Thibaudet and the unjustly neglected Suarès. Ahead still lies the *annus mirabilis* of 1913.

Anglès's flair for detecting the man behind the literary work – he never believed the two could be separated – encourages one to attempt the same in his own case. He combines something of the causticity of a Massis with the breadth of reference of a Thibaudet, the passionate lucidity of a Suarès, and the painstaking honesty of a Rivière, but one suspects that above all he would have identified himself with the subtle and elusive catholicity, in every sense of the word, of the cosmopolitan Labaud, to whom a generous amount of space is devoted in this volume.

Given the somewhat esoteric nature of his subject-matter, it is unlikely that Anglès's work will ever achieve the kind of popularity he sometimes yearned for, and which was accorded, for example, to Painter's biography of Proust. Nevertheless, it merits reading by anyone interested in any aspect of French culture in the first forty years of this century. His mastery of his material and his skill in presenting it are both astonishing.

efforts of the "summit" of high literature to remain independent of party doctrine? Where should "modernity" (experimental poetics) fit into the overall scheme? Should literature be by, or for, the working class? All that seemed certain amid these debates was that, as Jean-Pierre Morel says, "Le seul véritable écrivain révolutionnaire, c'est la révolution elle-même". Hence the frequent demand that literature should be epic in scale (like revolutionary Mexican architecture). Trotsky, while apparently more liberal than most, still clung to the concept of the party-line as the ultimate guide-rail.

In Soviet Russia, Germany or France, workers who could write interestingly were in short supply; in the home of intellectual elitism, France, the belief in an untapped reservoir of proletarian talent was less influential. A French worker, after a long investigation by Henri Barbusse's newspaper *Monde* (1928-9), charged that French Marxists and fellow-travellers were too often "littéraires et philosophes" and incapable of extracting "les grands traits de la culture prolétarienne". Trotsky undoubtedly spoke for many afraid to say the same thing when he maintained that the true new literature, whose nature could only be guessed at, must await the creation of the classless society. Till then, "proletarian literature" was as reductive a notion as "bourgeois literature". Meanwhile in France, pacifists, the *Clarté* group, the Surrealists and PCF members all vied for supremacy, and spent more time insulting each other than the enemy. For Breton, self-evidently, "tous les sujets de révolte sont bons". As with Surrealism itself, it was the marginals – the excommunicated (Babel, Olyesha; Zamyatin) or the unpalatable (Louis Guilloux) – who were the most interesting figures. One awkward fact was that, as with the French Revolution, the truly revolutionary works in Russia had preceded 1917. Writers are ahead of their times, and need not slavishly hang on to the coat-tails of History.

When he, too rarely, takes time off from following the activities of myriad *groupuscules* and often sterile disputes, and looks closely at a text (as when he draws an illuminating contrast between Gladkov's *Cement* and Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle*, on the score of their body and animal imagery), Morel proves an acute reader. He is in addition continuously alive to the rhetorical idiom practised by propagandists, which he compares tellingly to the Jewish jokes that Freud liked so much.

The book ends its enquiry before the Popular Front began to mobilize. Malraux, later to be welcomed as a prestigious ally to the revolutionary cause, was around 1930 being vilified

for trafficking in *Les Conquérants* in petty-bourgeois exoticism and individualist adventurism. In the period covered by Morel, a growing bureaucratization of the literary enterprise took place in Russia. It was backed by intimidation, self-censorship and mutual mistrust, and it led to demoralization. Stalin's hardly mentioned till near the end of this book, presumably because he needed to intervene directly only at a later date in what was then mainly a self-regulating system of mind-control.

Again, only in its latter stages does the book seek to justify its title, when Morel describes how the novel-genre itself came under attack as a figment of the bourgeois imagination. It was the familiar guilt-by-association: novels are produced and consumed by the leisured classes. From this premiss stemmed the repeated demands for a more documentary literature, for "factography". More "objective" guilt was heaped on to Barbusse, a communist inexplicably trying to run a periodical (*Monde*) with some independence from party influence. His honest admission that proletarian writers of real quality hardly existed in France was turned against him: he had prevented their emergence. For all his bumbling, Barbusse comes over as more engaging than the recent turncoat Aragon, volunteering, in his poem "Front Rouge", to howl mindlessly with the wolves, to praise the secret police, and to do his precious bit in the consolidation of Stalinism.

Morel's book is a mine of information but like any mine, rather airless and patchily lighted. Unusually for a French book, it often much detail and little by way of overarching schemata. But, the tigers reanimated here are not paper ones: people suffered and died as a result of disputes like these.

The latest issue of *La Nouvelle Revue Française* (October 1986, No 405) features stories by Marcel Schneider ("Les Morts de Venise") and François Mauriac ("La Ligne du Havre") and Francis Mauriac ("La Ligne du Havre").

## The writer as Writer

John Sturrock

ROGER LAPORTE  
Une Vie: Biographie  
614pp. Paris: POL, 150 fr.  
28674 40505

In this single, thick new volume called *Une Vie* are collected nine quite slight volumes published separately by Roger Laporte over twenty years. The first of these, *La Veille*, came out in 1963, the last, under the autumnal title of *Morlando*, in 1983; the nine volumes together are the greater part of everything that Laporte has published. By them he hangs or falls. For the nine books he had four different publishers, so he has been either a touchy or an unprofitable author, passing gamely on from house to house. But such a literary purist is he that it is rude to bring the business side in; he writes for himself and for all concerned solipsists who enjoy knowing to what singular extremes the self-communion of a writer can go. On the strength of *Une Vie* Laporte should most certainly hang, but this is a rare, undernourished kind of writing and he will more likely fall.

The nine books belong together because they are all about the one thing: what it is to write; they are, the cover of *Une Vie* declares, "biographie", not a biography, let alone the biography of anyone, just biography, the very genre itself. They are not, what one might well think them to be, autobiography, even though their author has no mind for anything or anyone but himself. But he writes about himself exclusively as a writer, in the actual moment of writing. *Une Vie* is the extraordinary record – a "logogram" or "scriptogram" by his own account – of the time he spends at his writing-table, with his attention turned entirely to the matter of writing. So this, if ever there was one, is the writer's life-story, except that all that we ordinarily call "life" has been left out. Laporte is a biographer who means to be broadcast "live" and not fob us off with a recording:

Alors que la vie ordinaire précède le récit que l'on peut en faire, j'ai parlé qu'une certaine vie n'est ni antérieure, ni extérieure à l'écriture... au départ il n'y avait rien à raconter, car on ne saurait faire le récit d'une histoire qui n'a pas encore eu lieu, d'une vie issue à laquelle seul l'écriture permettrait d'accéder.

*Une Vie* is thus uninterruptedly self-conscious, extending over several hundred pages a tendency rare in autobiography, even in modern French autobiographical volumes such as Michel Leiris and Roland Barthes have written. It is the writer's most authentic subject-matter. It is self-autobiography with a vengeance in that it keeps from us all the satisfactions of learning things about the past life, the opinions, the present circumstances, the prospects of the writer. Laporte tells us nothing about himself at all, he will not become an object. The jack-etchings of his books have sometimes been a little more forthcoming, with or without his permission: he is just over sixty and a teacher of philosophy in Montpellier; those are the bare facts the unrepentantly curious have to go on.

Laporte was still young when he understood what he could and could not do as a writer, and changed from orthodoxy into total introspection. In 1951 he wrote an account of a visit to the cathedral of Reims, made at a time when he was at a loss as to how to write the last chapter of a novel. The description of the cathedral in his "Souvenir de Reims" is heavily and ominously literary: "La cathédrale. Quel calme! Gravez et serrez tel celui d'un paysan, le soir, après la moisson...". But the *récit* breaks off very harshly just as it is ascending to its grandest moments; the writer is seized with a desperate self-awareness. He is not in Reims as he writes, with the cathedral before him, nor even in Paris with his unfinished novel; time has passed: "renonçons à la fiction. Je ne suis pas Reims le 5 juin mais à Alger le 18-décembre 1951". This scandalous and exasperated cutting back of his mind to actuality is the end of a pretence, that he can write forgetting that that is what he is doing. An authentic "nomination" of what is not there; like the cathedral of Reims, beyond him, but what he has begun to see is not beyond him: it is the nomination of a nomination: "Alors j'ai été tenté de quitter l'Algérie pour aller à la description de cette cathédrale".

As it materializes, the text creates a past, so that Laporte acquires something to which he is free to refer other than the present moment of his thought. He has made an archive for himself, and can reread it when he is unsure how to go on, hoping that the past might determine the future. The discontinuities of writing Laporte marks in his books by printing them in quite short sections, but as the work extends further and further behind him he overrides these breaks by returning to earlier

tentation m'a rappelé à la vraie voie du roman... la genèse se manifeste seulement lorsqu'elle devient genèse de la genèse." To many this will read as the most inhuman and defeatist of literary programmes, but to Laporte it is an inspired one, a high, perhaps a mystical vocation instilled by the experience of Reims.

He will not write "about" then, but write, perfectly intransitively, to try to answer the question he has posed himself: "Qu'est-ce que écrire?" This obstetrician of writing is out to catch himself in the act, to turn the mind in on itself, to conflate "doing" with "saying" in a seamless speech-act. This is the project of a philosopher because there is no reason to think that the workings of his intelligence may not stand for those of the human intelligence in general. He is not writing as himself but as the Writer, and the Writer is a functionary, whom we should not call a writer except at those times when he is writing. In practice, and especially early on in *Une Vie*, Laporte relates the Writer to the man by telling us that writing has for this man taken on an increasing importance in his life, a conclusion one might also come to from considering the nature of this volume and its elaborate, time-consuming preoccupation with its own making. But the living that Laporte has done and must continue to do, in the intervals of writing, is not merely relegated elsewhere, it has been sacrificed. For this stringent votary, writing displaces living:

J'attends de l'ouvrage à écrire ce que l'on demande d'habitude à la vie, ou même je vais jusqu'à croire que je peux, quant à moi, tenir pour négligeables les événements de ma vie d'homme, voire ceux du monde, en regard de ce qui peut m'arriver en écrivant, de ce qui ne pourra arriver que dans la mesure où l'écriture.

So there is a philosophy, indeed a poignancy in *Une Vie*, read as the memorial of someone who has come to the making of it with such purpose and such hope.

What Laporte set himself to do was nothing easy, for unlike other (auto)biographers he had nothing to go on, no teeming and seductive *vécu* on which to draw. Instead, as he is brought repeatedly to the low point of acknowledging in these volumes, his chosen way of writing is an ordeal. He has nowhere to escape to from the here and now. At the outset, too, there is the question of how to start writing at all when what is to be written is as yet in the future. Here I think is a first trace of falsity and inescapable contrivance in Laporte's absorbingly honest project, a first indication that his "logogram", as published, is not the whole story. At the start of *La Veille*, which is the start of *Une Vie*, he in fact looks back, beyond the time of beginning to write, to earlier days when he has thought of beginning but has not begun. So what we read in *La Veille* are not, strictly speaking, the first words, because those have gone unwritten; Laporte cannot deliver a total coincidence between his thought and his script.

He has his "project", a desire to write which, as he goes on writing, becomes more overtly erotic, or at blacker, more disorderly moments, Dionysian. There is something desirable ahead of him, but no knowing just what it is. The opening volume is passive, the Writer is "à l'écoute", watchful of his state of mind and of harmonizing this with whatever power it is outside himself from which words will come. Writing is both desirable and dangerous, a solicitation, as Laporte practises it; of the unknown which, as it is slowly realized, will produce as much distress in him as pleasure. Writing, indeed, is under perpetual threat from what he calls "contre-écriture", working to undo what he has done and aggressive evidence of the anarchic, centrifugal forces at work in language. *Une Vie* records the steady alienation of the Writer from what he writes, as ambition dwindles into achievement and the whole text, as it were, dies on him.

As it materializes, the text creates a past, so that Laporte acquires something to which he is free to refer other than the present moment of his thought. He has made an archive for himself, and can reread it when he is unsure how to go on, hoping that the past might determine the future. The discontinuities of writing Laporte marks in his books by printing them in quite short sections, but as the work extends further and further behind him he overrides these breaks by returning to earlier

formulations in the hope of rectifying them. Thus he writes wholly in the light of his writerly experience, using the already written, the settled but superseded, to condition his mind:

Je lis ce qui est écrit, et qui certes l'est une fois pour toutes, car, si désagréables pour ma vanité que puissent être parfois les conséquences de cette décision, je m'interdis de retoucher le texte déjà écrit une fois que je l'ai considéré comme achevé, mais, tant que ce texte ineffaçable est vivant, c'est à dire aussi longtemps que l'ouvrage n'est pas fini, je ne suis un lecteur ni indifférent, ni paresseux. Lorsque je me relis en vue d'écrire, je ne vois pas le texte tel qu'il est, dans ce qu'il dit, mais j'essaie plutôt de repérer les éléments qui s'ouvrent sur un texte à écrire.

The question hardly arises whether the revision he goes in for of what he has written earlier brings him closer to the truth, because the truth too is mobile here, travelling with the Writer as he goes and corresponding to the fluctuations of his mind.

Quite late on in the sequence, Laporte reveals that the text as published is in fact a severely edited version of everything that he has written, "un brouillon quintessencié". The eighty pages of *Figure* that we get are a reduction from 2,000 pages of Laporte's manuscript draft, the sixty pages of *Supplément* all that remain of 1,300 pages of writing. And these rough versions themselves are what he calls his "travail effectif", they are less than a total record of all that has come into his mind as he wrote. The scheme of *Une Vie* is based on the presumed equivalence of thinking and writing, but the volume itself indicates that writing, which is thinking about thinking, must always be sparer, more deliberate and more artful than first-degree thinking. A "scriptogram" the book may be, but a true "logogram" it could never be, it is more reflexive and less immediate than it appears. Were it not so it would have been unreadable.

Laporte was trying to realize something that we disenchant post-structuralists know to be literally unthinkable. In the phrase made familiar by Derrida, his ideal was to "s'entendre parler", he was in pursuit of that utter, unmediated intimacy with his own thought that Derrida sees as the hopeless and corrosive ideal bedevilling Western philosophy since it went wrong with Plato. Laporte will write it as it happens, there will be no time-lag between the mental event and its presentation, he will bring successfully to light "l'implicite grammatical de l'esprit". But the sad reality is that by the time the mental event is "present" it has gone; consciousness, one might say, is a killer: "Même si son discours traite de son propre métier qu'il est juste en train d'accomplir, l'écrivain n'a aucune intuition directe de ce qui se passe, mais, toujours, en retard, il accède à une histoire, apparemment la sienne, seulement en paléographie...". It is stretching things rather, to accept that the present moment too is past history, but this is the axiom which in fact disables Laporte's whole enterprise, since however keenly he attends to what he is doing he always *has* written, he is not able, because consciousness does not allow it, to catch himself actually writing.

This failure at a full and blissful coincidence of "doing" with "saying" means, however, that the Writer will go on, driven yet forever frustrated. There is more trickery on Laporte's part here, since it is hard to credit the purity of the inspiration on which he depends to continue writing, when he has known all along that he cannot win. He is thrown back on the fictions he long ago seemed to have forsaken. He no longer asks to be taken quite seriously, as the unlucky protagonist of the creative act, but rather as a historian, a performer who knows he is a performer. The language he had earlier put his trust in, as an unequivocal transcript of the mental life of the Writer, he now admits to be metaphorical: "Il y aura toujours du jeu entre le trajet prévu et le tracé effectif, glissement secret se terminant en une saccade où une métaphore fait place à une autre métaphore, mais à son tour ce jeu lui-même n'est-il pas qu'une image?" And the first-person presence, the "scripteur" or, in Laporte's guardedly neutral term for him, "celui qui dit Je", is equally as metaphorical as everything else in this fatally progressive text. As an autobiographer forcibly turned biographer, Laporte has grasped that the self will not appear in the text, even though he has gone to the extreme of taking as his biographical subject the self writing the self. The textual

first person is part of the show: "L'écrivain, loin de décrire une machine qui lui serait extérieure, en est un organe dont la fonction consiste à représenter la totalité de la machine comme si pour finir la main devrait se dessiner elle-même." The hand drawing itself is an echo no doubt of the Dutch artist M.C. Escher's cheerful representation of that same involuted act, but that representation does not include Escher's own, real hand, any more than *Une Vie* can include Laporte's own, uncatchable self. As time passes and his awareness deepens of the conditions of writing, Laporte turns to presenting himself as a puppet or a victim, trapped publicly between the inadequacies of writing and what he declares to be the "agony" of not writing. But he can't keep from trying, and the text continues, energized by its own failure and by Laporte's knowing that he is more the led than the leader, that there is a saving eccentricity in language which will possess it's user and ensure that he does more than empty repeat himself, for all the constancy of his intentions.

*Une Vie* is better read not straight through, in one, but more as it was written, by steady increments. It stands then as an unexpectedly varied, direct, clear-sighted work, definitive of Laporte's peculiar new genre of "scriptographic". Its theme, which has to do with where writing comes from, is a romantic one and could have been hugely portentous, as it becomes in the hands of such like-minded writers as Maurice Blanchot; but Laporte is mainly both lucid and modest, and astonishingly resourceful in sustaining his cool dramatization of an intractable and elusive philosophical crux. *Une Vie* is now presumably over, and Roger Laporte has given up writing for living. But writing may yet have kept its promise to him, for after all the years, and the thousands of manuscript pages, of expecting, aspiring and subsiding, his large, potentially interminable sequence ends on the words: "Mais quelle est donc cette douceur, cette terrible douceur?" Which makes it sound as if this unusually patient, mystically minded Writer has gone to his reward.

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# The horror of what happened to happen

George Craig

MARGUERITE DURAS  
La Douleur  
Translated by Barbara Bray  
192 pp. Collins. £8.95.  
000 223065 8

"La Douleur" itself and the other, shorter texts grouped here under that name, in Barbara Bray's serviceable translations, are all prompted by aspects of the experience of Marguerite Duras in Paris in 1944-45: a time of dizzying swings between hope and desolation, joy and horror, within both public and private experience. Innumerable fictional reconstructions have, over the years since then, simplified all this into an adventure. Unassumingly, unemphatically, these texts set that aside and commit us instead to something virtually – often actually – unbearable. Two of them, "La Douleur" and "Albert of The Capitals", draw the reader into a world where imaginative participation seems inexcusable, whether as intrusion or as indulgence. In "La Douleur" the young first-person narrator chronicles first her wait for the return from Dachau of her husband, and then her awareness of every detail of his ruined body and its functions. In "Albert of The Capitals" we become part of the group of *Résistants* watching a young woman interrogate an elderly informer while two male colleagues torture him.

If the other pieces are less harrowing, they are hardly less disquieting. In one, the narrating "I" is picked out (she is an *intellectuelle* and her world fascinates him) for long talks in public places by a Gestapo agent, with the promise of help for her arrested husband as the bribe. Others show us a simple, spirited, handsome boy who has joined the hated Milice only so that he can get about in a car with a gun; a collaborationist feeling the full weight of his situation as the war ends; and a little Jewish girl locked away for safety in a strange limbo.

There are pointers in plenty here, and their direction seems unmistakable. There is the awfulness of the things addressed, and the specificity of detail as to people, dates and places within that. There is the location of all this within particular lives (most notably those of Marguerite Duras herself and those closest to her). And there is the intersection of their lives with the lives of others, at least one of whom (François Mitterrand) has other claims on our attention. Taken together, all these seem to require us to see the texts as forming something like what historians call a "primary source", and, even more, what librarians and booksellers call "non-fiction". Indeed it might seem insulting to do anything else, and especially to suggest that they had literary importance. In the fascinating short glosses she has written for the texts, Duras seems to add her support to this. "La Douleur", she says, is a "diary" and can't really be called "writing" – indeed she finds it "inconceivable" that she could have kept even a diary at the time. The point is clear enough: it is painful for her now to contemplate both what she wrote about and the fact of having written about it. In this light the texts are "a tremendous chaos of thought and feeling that I couldn't bring myself to tamper with, and beside which literature was something of which I felt ashamed."

It is hard to see how she would not feel that: which of us can easily spin the lies we call "fictions" about the moral and physical degrading of those near us? How, even if we could, would we face those who know literature only as a pastime, an amusement? Not for the only time in these pages one is reminded of Samuel Beckett, who dealt with related historical issues, of which he too had first-hand experience, by refusing to speak of them at all. But, however understandable and indeed admirable Duras's feelings, they do not of themselves determine the nature and value of what she has written.

There is, first, the fact that much of the charge of the texts comes from the quiet, sober

writing. Elision and understatement provoke the scream or the groan in us even as they exclude them from the text (one thinks of the unheralded paragraph in "La Douleur" in which the narrator tells her husband, when he is at last back from the dead, that she wants a divorce). When history is also now, we are no longer looking only at history. But there is something else too. There are occasional "political" patches in these texts (summary judgments on individuals, groups, classes), but the sort of easy identification that these suggest – heroes and heroines over here, villains over there – sounds as if it has been learned by heart, and is at variance with Duras's exploration of feeling and action. Not only is the "La Douleur" more than simply she-wait, she is not forever different from the tough interrogator and fancier of "real men" of the texts in Part Three. Indeed, as so often in her fiction, Duras's imagination is drawn above all by the aberrant. It is to take nothing away from the actual, terrible world of Paris then to say that it has powerful echoes in what we can know, from her work as a whole, of her inner life. Just as the beautiful and moving *L'Amant* regrouped many elements familiar from her novels, so, in their different way, do these texts. It all happened, all right; but it happened to happen to her.

## Ghosts written

Nicole Irving

PATRICK MODIANO  
Dimanches d'Août  
161 pp. Paris: Gallimard. 72fr.  
207070759 8

Patrick Modiano's *Dimanches d'Août* is a ghostly novel, and a novel full of ghosts. It inhabits the here and now (of Nice, mostly) with a strange detachment, and appears to have little purchase on reality, recoiling from it rather than Jean, its narrator, does from the vulgar self-assurance of man wearing a *gourmante*, a bracelet on which the wearer's Christian name is engraved for all to see. Reading it is like being offered a photographic negative: the real thing would be a *policeur*, novel or film, in which a pair of seductive rogues (Jean and girlfriend Sylvia) made a successful getaway with an extremely valuable diamond and sought refuge in Nice. Here they would pass unnoticed among a population of outsiders as artificial as the buildings Jean compares to "gigantic cakes or ocean liners", and they would bump into someone sufficiently rich and shady to buy the diamond from them. They might then live a life of eternal August Sundays.

But in *Dimanches d'Août*, this dream has fallen apart: Jean is a man adrift; Sylvia is gone; the past is a maze of haunting uncertainties and, as we gradually come to realize, of possibilities which Jean cannot accept. He recalls the events leading to Sylvia's disappearance and how he tried to discover what happened. Although he pursued leads with a detective's thoroughness, he focused his attention on what was peripheral to the central mystery. He was more willing to believe that the shady Neals, a couple whom he and Sylvia befriended, were ghosts than to contemplate the possibility that Sylvia gave him the slip. All along, by chance it seems, he was in possession of an essential clue, a photograph showing Neal with Sylvia's husband (or lover?), Villecourt. Jean had taken this just before he met

reading. Elision and understatement provoke the scream or the groan in us even as they exclude them from the text (one thinks of the unheralded paragraph in "La Douleur" in which the narrator tells her husband, when he is at last back from the dead, that she wants a divorce). When history is also now, we are no longer looking only at history. But there is something else too. There are occasional "political" patches in these texts (summary judgments on individuals, groups, classes), but the sort of easy identification that these suggest – heroes and heroines over here, villains over there – sounds as if it has been learned by heart, and is at variance with Duras's exploration of feeling and action. Not only is the "La Douleur" more than simply she-wait, she is not forever different from the tough interrogator and fancier of "real men" of the texts in Part Three. Indeed, as so often in her fiction, Duras's imagination is drawn above all by the aberrant. It is to take nothing away from the actual, terrible world of Paris then to say that it has powerful echoes in what we can know, from her work as a whole, of her inner life. Just as the beautiful and moving *L'Amant* regrouped many elements familiar from her novels, so, in their different way, do these texts. It all happened, all right; but it happened to happen to her.

Sylvia. He cannot face the thought that after leaving Villecourt and running off with the diamond (whose diamond?) to join him, Sylvia allowed herself to be "abducted" by the Nazi whom she perhaps knew.

Jean evades these questions because he is up against a more daunting problem than the familiar, reassuring one of unhappy love. He filled his time by unravelling the enigma of the Neals' identity: American diplomats? ghost impostors? But we feel he is wary of following any path that will lead back to himself: bumping into Villecourt seven or so years after these events, he contrives to miss this opportunity of discovering the truth about Sylvia. We sense that he fears finding himself on a par with the likes of Villecourt (who, it is hinted, murdered someone in the turmoil of the Liberation of Paris). Unquestionably, the central mystery, Jean himself.

This haunting, deceptively slim novel obsessively revisits Modiano's characteristic themes, but stripped back to essentials. Not up to the conscious search for identity undertaken by the amnesiac detective of *Rue des boulevards obscures* (which won the Prix Goncourt in 1978), Jean remains an outsider at sea in the world. Modiano's novels reveal a fascination with the murky period of wartime France: here, betrayal is hinted at but difficult to locate, and like the musty smell in the Nice room Jean shared with Sylvia, memories of the period pervade the novel with a peculiar, tantalizing discretion. Nice itself is a city of illusions which attracts Modiano's characters: to meet many who seem echoes from previous novels (impostors and variously shady types for the most part), or even identical to earlier creations, like the landlady with her aviary, the same, sad woman encountered in *De si loins gorgons*.

Jean felt he and Sylvia had woven a spider's web in which to catch someone. In fact he was caught in it, and it is Modiano who, from novel to novel, is doing the weaving, drawing in a few disparate threads from here and there – Digne la Rochelle, Camus, the *nouveau roman*, detective novels and films – but producing a fine web of his own.

## Inner spaces, outer space

Robin Buss

RICHARD CANAL  
La Malédiction de l'éphémère  
179 pp. Paris: La Découverte. 65fr.  
27071 16173

The relativity of cultures (and culture) is a prime concern of both alien and post-apocalyptic science fiction. The two meet in Richard Canal's novel, set in a post-nuclear world where the epicentres affected by radiation have been sealed off by an extraterrestrial task force, and those responsible for starting the war imprisoned inside them. Outside these gold target zones, life has continued with a kind of normality, making the best use of pre-war technology, and a few adventurers have been driven by curiosity to penetrate the black and red circles that protect the gold centres.

These expeditions, when the novel opens, have been organized with Roadrunners conducting Searchers, whose booty is the works of art, paintings and sculpture of extraordinary power and pessimism; created by the prisoners in the gold zones under the combined effects of radiation and the drugs taken to combat it. As

readers, we are led by Canal on a perilous journey where the danger is that a fairly substantial narrative will be crushed by the weight of allegory.

We make it, but only just. Emphasizing the relativity of viewpoints, *La Malédiction de l'éphémère* is told in the first person by a Searcher and a Roadrunner, and by a neutral third person narrator. The Searcher is impelled by curiosity, the Roadrunner by the need for money to buy drugs for his dying girlfriend, and, on the outside, dealers and collectors are happy to exploit the suffering of the imprisoned artists. Only gradually do we learn the motive behind the violence expressed by their macabre works.

The epilogue, with its passage to outer space, proves the most hazardous of all: art and science, God and deliverance, the smile of the Mona Lisa . . . We do not, thankfully, reach a conclusion: is decidedly sententious: "Il est encore de par le monde des prisons plus hautes que celle qui a été assignée à l'humanité". But for the rest *La Malédiction de l'éphémère* is inventive and assured. Canal, on the evidence of this first full-length novel, is someone to watch.

# Catching the unknown on the move

John Melmoth

JIM CRACE  
Continents  
154 pp. Heinemann. £4.95.  
034 14824 5

The epigraph from Pyletius' irksomely septuagintal *Histories* (which volume, suspiciously, does not appear in *The Oxford Companion to Classical Literature*) proposes a seventh continent, inhabited by seven peoples, ruled by seven masters, bounded by seven seas, the corners of which are "trade and superstition". Jim Crace has explored this super-numerary land-mass from its impenetrable forests through the agricultural regions, sparking with maize and sunflowers, tomatoes and melons, grazed by "fat and perfect" cows, through the acacia scrub of the central flatlands, to the bazzars, overflowing with fish and vegetable stalls, swarming with beggars and tourists. In the course of his travels he has amassed trunkloads of data about its ethnography, folklore, sexual customs, mythology, husbandry, systems of belief and manners, ways of thinking and seeing, all deployed to beguiling effect in the seven (what else?) stories of *Continents*.

The timing of his journey is as crucial as its extent. What Crace encounters is a land in a state of transition; his continentals are caught in the act of reconciling the demands of commerce and religion, ambition and loyalty, culture and nurture, metropolitan sophistication and rural ease. They inhabit the surface tension generated where antinomies meet, in constant danger of sinking into torpor or taking flight into the thin air of technological idealism.

The case of Lowdo in "Talking Skull" is paradigmatic. Educated in the city, he disdains from his slicker peers the fact that his father's fortune is based on a herd of free-breasted (hermaphroditic) cattle. These "recreant and degenerate" twins of bull calves not only put on beef with "eunuch ease" but have rudimentary udders capable of producing milky, glandular secretions, which Lowdo knows cannot be milk, as advertised, but which are highly prized as aphrodisiacs. Lowdo has to

develop a strategy for coping with "wealth at the expense of science", for coming to terms with the fact that his own education and enlightenment are bought at the cost of the continued mental slumbers of the folks back home. His memories of rural bliss complement a dream of cool business efficiency, banks of telephones, ranks of secretaries.

"Talking Skull" exemplifies the complexity of Crace's ideas and his powers of compression. The story is the nodal point of a sequence of complex interconnections, antitheses that weave themselves into elaborate couplings. Nothing is uncomplicated. The plight of the free-market, "malformed and cursed", disruptive in their mute attempts to express conflicting sexualities, suggests the distances that even the boy with everything has to travel in his imaginative and social life.

"Cross Country" also engineers a clash of cultures and expectations when a Canadian teacher is persuaded, against his inclinations, to race Isra, horseman and local hero. "The World With One Eye Shut" is a prisoner's tale of a witless sister caught between family ties and the demands of love and deference. In "Sins and Virtues", the old calligrapher resorts to passing off fakes of his own work as genuine in order to meet his government's insistence that he produce masterpieces for export. "Electricity" brings the trappings of technology to a people for whom surfaced roads, petrol and air conditioning are certain good. Ironically, the superstitious fears engendered by the pre-ubiquity – that the town will "spin with electricity. And it will disappear" – are very near to the mark. The restaurant's new fan whizzes round with cyclonic ferocity, tugging people's clothes, filling their eyes with tears, *bringing the house down*. The company agent in "The Prospect from the Silver Hill", the most painful and poetic of the stories, is driven to insomnia and retreats into madness because of the conflicting demands of instinct and occupation.

The best and most complex of these anything-but-plain tales is the tightly controlled and bleakly hilarious "On Heat", which concerns itself with the threat to immemorial doings posed by the investigative curiosity of outsiders. The Professor is a naturalist and ethnographer whose concern with the sexual

life of the forest people is simultaneously detached and prurient. His studies of menstrual synchronicity, public festivals of impregnation and co-ordinated mass parturition, all of which he is disposed to regard as natural, provoke him to priapic excesses. He wheedles and harasses his reluctant wife and pays her to lift her nightdress "like a whore" in order to demonstrate his superiority to natural man. It is this much-interfered-with woman who makes the collection's most overtly political connections between learning and innocence. She deplores the rapacity of "the anthropologists, the quacks, the weather cocks, the dilettantes, the journalists, the tuft-hunters" who disguise their titillation as objective inquiry.

*Continents* is nothing if not original. For all that comparisons between it and other collections seem somewhat tenuous, Brian Aldiss's

*Seasons in Flight* (1984) can be cited, to Crace's advantage. Aldiss not only fabricated continents (albeit extraterrestrial ones), he also blended the folk wisdom of Sumatran beaches and Carpathian snowscapes with a Hellenic version of pastoral. Crace has mixed similar ingredients to create something altogether more complex. Whereas Aldiss recorded the head-on collision of the First World and the Third, Crace recounts that collision from the inside, from the point of view of those who are ontologically on the move. Far from using myths and folk-tales to lend a ready *faux naïf* immediacy to what he has discovered, Crace is conscious of, and demonstrates, the subtlety and range of such genres. The stories are sparsely and elegantly constructed and the collection as a whole has the accomplished inevitability of an important début.

## Long-nosed news-hound

Gerald Mangan

R. K. NARAYAN  
Talkative Man  
123 pp. Heinemann. £7.95.  
0434 49616 2

Readers familiar with Malgudi, the fictional Indian town where R. K. Narayan's characters spend much of their time observing each other's lives, will probably recognize the eponymous narrator of his latest novel, Talkative Man, who gave a droll account of himself in *Lawley Road* as an aspiring news-hound, has been set talking again, with another tale arising from his thirst for copy and his local fame. "I have earned this title", he begins, "because I cannot contain myself. My impulse to share an experience with others is irresistible . . ."

*Talkative Man*, as a brief prelude gives us to understand, has been recounted by instalments to the owner of the Boardless Hotel, a "born listener". It is a short book, whose brevity has even drawn an apologetic postscript from Narayan ("I do not concern myself with quantity when writing . . ."), but it crowds a great deal into a simple framework.

"TM" has a pliable nature as well as a long nose, and it's this combination that embroils him in the odd affair of Dr Rann – a fair-haired stranger in a three-piece suit, who steps majestically off the Delhi train one day and installs himself, to the embarrassment of the over-awed station-master, as a sitting tenant in the waiting-room. TM is drawn in when the mysterious visitor seeks him out in the Town Hall Library, casually mentions his vital role in a United Nations project, and enlists his help in seeking alternative accommodation. Although nettled by his *hauteur*, and later by his fastidious rejection of every house offered by the estate agent ("It'll be a nuisance to maintain the garden"), TM's sympathy and curiosity are aroused just enough to resettle him, for the time being, in his own rather lonely ancestral villa.

TM is also on the scent of a Story, in which a distinguished visitor honours a provincial backwater with his presence, and so on; and his fledgling career takes an encouraging step for-

ward when it actually appears in print – a news item whose unwitting subject has had to be photographed by a comically elaborate subterfuge. Locked in with his paperwork, or lounging in pyjamas in his host's favourite chair, Rann remains high-handedly evasive; but the unsought publicity throws a dramatic light on his past, when a dauntingly large woman turns up at the station, news-clipping in hand, to reclaim her long-lost husband.

TM's self-confessed garrulity is frequently contradicted by his dealings with other characters. When he decides to protect his guest from the vengeance of this termagant, TM shows a fine talent for keeping a secret; and in his own subsequent investigations of Rann, which expose him as a multiple bigamist with a fistful of passports, he acts with the discretion of a sleuth. When he discovers Rann's lecherous pursuit of the librarian's noble granddaughter, he behaves with admirable restraint; and his eventual success in foiling the villain depends as much on silence as on cunning.

The novel's climax, in which Rann addresses a public meeting and inspires mass swooning with an apocalyptic vision of a globe-devouring tropical weed, is a small masterpiece of understated farce. TM's disenchantment with him makes for a satisfactory conclusion, but most of the comedy derives from his role as a benighted victim of his own innocence – which acts as a mirror, to the wide-eyed curiosity in the peasant community around him. His initial deference to Rann as an "international figure" is plainly symptomatic of old forms of subservience, which still tends to overvalue all things European. Narayan satirizes his gullibility with an oblique and charmingly gentle touch, and is still able to remind us that "Malgudi climate has something in it that irons out outlandish habits".

Published earlier this year in Methuen's "Contemporary Writers" series, Ronald Binn's *J. G. Farrell* (109 pp. £2.75. 0 416 40330 4) is a study of the novelist, whose best known works are the "Empire" novels *Troubled* (1970), *The Siege of Krishnapur* (1973) and *The Singapore Grip* (1978), which places emphasis on Farrell's "distinctly dark, idiosyncratic, tragicomic picture of existence".

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Much of Lynne Reid Banks's novel is taken up by explanations of the traumas suffered by the Dutch couple. As the recipients of these confidences, Cal and Sue become increasingly ashamed of their own petty estrangements, and slowly a reconciliation is effected. In some sense, Niels and Marjolain also undergo a healing process, the latter especially finding immense relief in the recounting of her experience. The novel ends with a wiser Sue looking back at the holiday after ten years have passed, both couples now united, the only problem the

This tendency to a swift working-out of psychological problems seriously endangers the credibility of a novel which attempts to draw fairly grand parallels between the crises of history and smaller conflicts, the irritants of everyday life. Having said that, the book is certainly enjoyable.

and the women who survive are sterile, because the infertility conferred extends to all reproductive tissue. Ever since, Saul and his friends have lain low, agonizing over their dubious gift and its consequences, if released, might be disastrous. Herself infected, Lyle survives, and in a brilliant series of revelations comes to accer-


*Brantwood's grand guignol* flourishes create an appropriate frisson, and the book is never less than enjoyable, humorous and humane. The narrator's predicament is genuinely moving, and at the same time we are invited to admire in a more detached way the neat dovetailing of Ruskinian notions with the lives of his unbelieving biographers. There is even a suggestion that by looking at such oddities the nature of obsession itself might be revealed. The fictional seekers after truth may have failed to enter Brantwood, but the fiction has penetrated some of its mystery.

These objections wouldn't matter so much if Massie's novel had anything more to offer than a string of such minor irritations. Augustus hardly an obscure figure, and the general outline of his career — his crushing of his rivals in the Civil Wars, his extension of the Empire, the flourishing of the arts, in particular of literature, during his reign — will be familiar to anyone who has ever opened a history book. He has been exposed to the BBC or the Kinema. Massie manages to add little to such knowledge; but Augustus is an enigma, a real man without

Above all, though, the claim on the dust-jacket notwithstanding, there is next to nothing in *Augustus* on the subject of power. To the Romans power was granted on a scale not possible again until the rise of the British Empire, and if Augustus is interesting it is because he was chief among those chosen to wield it. Here, however, he is too busy pursuing power to be able to speculate on its nature, and once he has achieved it he has disappointingly little to say about it.

It's Christmas 1141. Stephen is up, Maud is down. And in Shrewsbury Brother Caedfel has a new young assistant in the herb garden and a new crime to solve when the recently appointed priest of the Foregate is discovered floating in the mill-pond. Another inimitable blend of crime history and romance from Ellis Peters: the mixture is very much as before, but the superb professionalism in construction and the fluency of the narration ensure that it slips down with ease.

**'Ayer's elucidation of these difficult, fragmentary texts is most helpful'**  
George Steiner in the  
*Sunday Times*

02 27105  £2.95

Gravely humane, the book is also enervated, distended, desperately long. When she allows them a moment's peace, Wilhelm's characters love the fleeting world, and love themselves as well, with a chaste and ironical self-esteem that almost succeeds in rinsing the story of its long intervals of fatuity. If the reader comes away at least with a sense of the moral composition of those characters, a sense of the lucid *gravitas* of the world they falteringly reverse, *Welcome, Chaos* will have succeeded to the full extent of its reach.

The novels shortlisted for this year's Booker Prize are *The Old Devils*, by Kingsley Amis; *The Handmaid's Tale*, by Margaret Atwood; *Gabriel's Lament*, by Paul Bailey; *What's Bred in the Bone*, by Robertson Davies; *An Artist of the Floating World*, by Kazuo Ishiguro; and *An Insular Possession*, by Timothy Mo.



## POETRY COMPETITION: READERS' CHOICE

## A Friendship/CONNIE BENSLEY

He made restless forays  
into the edge of our marriage.  
One Christmas Eve he came late,  
his dark hair crackling with frost,  
and ate his carnation buttonhole  
to amuse the baby.

When I had the second child,  
he came to the foot of my bed at dusk,  
bringing pineapples and champagne,  
whispering 'Are you awake?' –  
singing a snatch of opera.  
The Nurse tapped him on the shoulder.

At the end, we took turns at his bedside.  
I curled up in the chair; listened to each breath  
postponing itself indefinitely.  
He opened his eyes once, and I leaned forward:  
'Is there anything you want?'  
'Now she asks', he murmured.

## The Emperor Of Saliva/STEPHEN DUNCAN

A glistening drop hanging from his lower lip,  
swollen in anticipation of polythene,  
nylon, fur or felt,

this salivating infant, toga towelled after bath,  
plucks tea-bags from the rubbish bin  
and dangles them above his mouth.

Saddling my neck, he tucks his knees  
behind the flaps of my ears,  
a mahout on his elephant,

and with Urdhu cries  
grasps at the crowds we pass,  
the heavy curtains, long potted leaves –

rubbing his soft body.  
No material left unsoaked or perversion unexplored,  
a wet moon spreading down his vested chest.

so the handbag, bucket, retreating ball  
have become the victims of his domain.  
A debaucher of this quiescent retinue

he sucks the knob of the tea pot lid  
and pushes his finger down the spout.  
He waves a medicine bottle in the air,

a brown glass pendulum,  
to and fro, to and fro,  
then hits his forehead and screams.

A subject has struck back  
and he throws the rebel  
to smash on the floor.

This year, for the first time, the prize-winners in the TLS / Cheltenham Festival of Literature Poetry Competition were chosen by two separate methods. The judges – the poets U. A. Fanthorpe, Blake Morrison and Hugo Williams and, from the TLS, Alan Hollinghurst (Deputy Editor) and Holly Eley (Assistant Editor) – reduced the entry of approximately 4,500 poems to a shortlist of 84, published in the TLS of October 3. Readers were invited to vote by ballot for the poems they preferred; and the clear winner was Connie Bensley's poem "A Friendship" (No 65 on the shortlist). Connie Bensley, who lives in London and works part-time in a doctor's surgery, has had two collections of poetry, *Progress Report* and *Moving In*, published by Peterloo Poets; and she is also the author of two plays broadcast on Radio 4, *Loving Room* and *Changing Partners*. She receives £500.

The readers' Second Prize of £350 is shared between Neil Curry, for his poem "St Kilda" (No 21) and Stephen Duncan, for "The Emperor of Saliva" (No 1). Mr Curry is the Head of the English Department in a Lake District comprehensive school; his collection *Between Roof and Sky* was published by the Mandeville Press and his translation of

## St Kilda/NEIL CURRY

The map the dominie had tacked up  
On the schoolroom wall didn't even show  
St Kilda, but then only a foreigner  
Would have needed one to find his way past Mull  
And Skye, out through the Sound of Harris, then on  
For fifty empty miles over the  
Oily pitch and swell of the grey  
North Atlantic. Any St Kildans,  
Out of sight of land, with bad weather closing,  
Knew they'd only to watch the flight-paths  
Of the birds: guillemot and gannet would wreck them  
On the Stacs round Boreray, while puffins  
Scuttering back wave-high to Dun  
Would prove a safe guide home to Hirta  
And the Village Bay.

## II

Birds. Or angels even  
They must have seemed, the women  
Plucking in a cloud of feathers,  
At the haul of fulmar their menfolk

Had themselves plucked off the cliffs  
Of Conachair; cragsmen spidering  
Thirty fathoms down, along ledges  
Of guano, dependent on sheer faith

In their neighbours and on a horsehair rope.  
Claim life those cliffs could, but always would  
Sustain it while there were sea-birds  
In such thousands to stew or dry;

Even a gannet's neck, turned inside out,  
Made a snug boot, and oil from the fulmar  
Not only fuelled their lamps, but was a panacea  
For no matter what ills or ailments of the island.

## III

Ultima Thule it was until the Victorians  
Sent in their missionaries  
To pound out the parable of the Prodigal Son  
To people who hadn't anywhere to stray to  
And had never seen a pig.

Then steamers came, and summer visitors  
With gimcrack charities and new disease,  
Tipping the cragsmen with a penny each  
To see them capering about on Conachair:

Pennies that the winter ferryman  
Would finger from the eyelids of their dead.

## IV

By lantern-light  
They loaded a few more sticks  
Of furniture and the last of the sheep,  
And then they drowned their dogs.

In the morning  
According to custom, in every  
Empty house there was a Bible  
Left open at Exodus.

Euripides' *The Bacchae* by the Cambridge University Press. Mr Duncan is a sculptor and part-time teacher at Maidstone College of Art and Middlesex Polytechnic, and has contributed to the Arts Council's *New Poetry* anthologies 5, 6 and 7. His poem "Snake Baby" was also shortlisted (No 31).

Before the readers' vote had closed, the judges met to decide on their separate trio of winners. With relative ease they reduced their long shortlist to 10 poems: Robin Blake's "Yakub" (No 11), Rodney Pybus's "And There was Light" (No 13), Carole Satyamurti's "Pictograph in Dust" (No 37), Stuart Jones's "After Hiroshima" (No 41), Freda Bromhead's "Counterfoils" (No 43), Elizabeth Bartlett's "The Novel" (No 45), Michael Lasker's "A Request to my Cousin Stephen in Heploostall" (No 66); and the three prize-winners, whose final positions were decided by vote.

The First Prize of £500 goes to "Greta Garbo" by Paul Groves, a teacher at a primary school in Cheltenham. His poems have appeared in *Poetry*, *Introduction Three* and in the *South-West Review Anthology*; his "Cresting" was also shortlisted (No 30).

## JUDGES' CHOICE

## Child-death song/JAMES GREENE

We saw the four-month-old 'foetus' asleep  
in his trench on the battlefield, face down in mud,  
as if worshipping: a conqueror  
conquered. A greater Lord than Life must have

flung a harpoon: he had not had to be born.  
By us it had to be borne – that we, only  
just introduced to his peculiar,  
peace-bringing being, could now never know

him: released like a prisoner-of-war into  
airy regions of ear-splitting Bach or god-  
knows-what. His mother – she had called him  
'Linus': *flax or linen: child Linus, most*

wondrous of musicians: therefore murdered by  
Apollo – is the grave where her baby lies,  
not lapped in linen. Gone back to the  
sea from which he came, she cannot now call

him back, on harp or flute or viol: gone beyond  
music, he must remain a name among names,  
a blank in a sea of dreams.

## \*

His heart,  
a collapsed accordion, ~~was it punctured~~

by joy, that his father caved in at last, and  
even looked forward to him: as when, scrambling  
to a brambly summit, someone catches –  
sweaty and scratched and wishing he'd never

embarked on the climb – a glimpse, through the arch of  
a fortress in ruins, of a sea which is  
soothing?

## \*

Thus in the presence of the  
radiographer and in the light of

death, he eased us into being, as we – who'd  
been falling apart – were blessed by sadness, as  
he – slipping his anchor – vanished, for  
better or worse, with not so much as a

squeak or a chord or a pang.

## \*

## Funeral music

pleases, for a time: uncurdled, unscorched,  
like the sea. And – as the inspiring  
sun (Apollo now grinning) strikes a sterile,

bitter ocean – breeds, establishes, unites.

James Greene, who won the Second Prize of £250 for "Child-death Song" (No 84), had two further poems shortlisted, "Couples" (No 42) and "Fritz Baedeker talks in his sleep . . ." (No 47). His publications include *Dead-man's-fall* (Bodley Head, 1980) and translations of Mandelstam and Afanasy Fet, and he has written radio programmes on Valéry and on the Grimms' fairy-tales. Last year he won the British Comparative Literature Association Translation Competition.

James Sutherland-Smith, under the pseudonym of Mohammed Salah, had four poems shortlisted – Nos 6, 32, 37 and 7, "The Fossil", to which the judges gave the Third Prize of £100. The youngest of the prize-winners (born in 1948), he teaches English in Qatar; he has published two books of poetry, *A Singer from Sabiya* (Many Press) and *Naming of the Arrow* (Salamander Imprint), and is a previous First Prize-winner in this competition.

The identities of (almost) all the shortlisted poets are revealed overlaid. The prizes, contributed by the TLS, will be presented and the winning poems discussed by the judges and read by their authors at the Everyman Theatre, Cheltenham, on October 12 at 12.30pm (tickets £1).

## Greta Garbo/PAUL GROVES

A Japanese paparazzo photographer has been waiting outside her apartment for more than three years, but has never succeeded in getting a full-face picture.

Mostly you get the din of the Franklin D. Roosevelt Drive,  
traffic plying this thoroughway beside  
the East River. Mostly you get the sense  
of being alive, of being five time zones from home,  
from that family rooftop in Kawasaki, one block  
from the Sojiji Temple. I have captured  
kids playing pat-ball at one two-fiftieth of a second  
at f4, leaves drifting to the ground on East 52nd  
at proportions of that speed, but  
Dame Fortune stays elusive. For thirty eight months  
she has not bought zucchini. I find this remarkable.  
The Americans call a swede a rutabaga;  
I call this Swede the whole vocabulary,  
depending on my mood: witch, goddess, foil, mantrap.  
It is as if she never lived, and all I have done  
for a slice of my life is kick cans,  
light up another Lucky Strike, hope yet again  
to strike lucky. I suppose this is an odyssey  
in pursuit of elusiveness itself, a quest  
for the resurrection of beauty: Odysseus  
blew a decade on his errand. There's time yet.  
When the wind blows, desperate, down from Maine,  
and it's thirty below, I curse and stamp  
and spend all day in the diner, wiping  
condensation from the pane, focusing.  
He brings me soup, and tuts, scratching his head.  
'I thought Polacks were the limit, but  
you're something else.' Life has become  
a philosophical acceptance of loss, a conflation  
of zilch and Zen. Something stirs,  
but it is only the janitor humping garbage  
onto the sidewalk for the next collection.  
She made a movie called "Joyless Street"  
in 1925, the year my mother was born  
high in the hills near Kawakami  
where the snowflakes are huge, and the air silent.

## The Fossil/JAMES SUTHERLAND-SMITH

'If necessary we can go back to the desert.' –  
Reported of King Faisal during the oil crisis of 1974.

As is the custom we have perched  
On thorn bushes a slim haunch  
Of mutton and the rice we cannot eat –  
Clear of the ground so only birds may feed.

Now under an acacia we sip tea  
And watch dust devils skedaddle  
Along the highway's grainy liquorice  
Between a frail, odd expanse of seedlings.

Here iron giraffes clatter and lean down.  
Their unimaginable mouths drink  
From levels hundreds of feet beneath  
As tankers, their round calves, suck water from them.

Sayer Al Harthy offers me a cigarette.  
His robe's linen whispers with the gesture  
Like paper tissue drawn from a box.  
He has shown me the omega shape

Of stones which form a Bedu mosque  
And explained with so few words that I think  
Not even enormous wealth can drown  
Habits made by the economies of thirst.

He points to the fossil I have found,  
A bean-sized snail or nautilus  
Stone-dry for millennia, and asks  
'Teacher, tell me, where does this thing come from?'

Out of courtesy or cowardice  
I answer 'From the time of dinosaurs  
And Noah when men prayed to animals  
So that God covered the earth with water.'

Handwritten note in the right margin: "The Fossil" is a poem by James Sutherland-Smith.



## Familiar fealty

Anne Haverty

JONSTALLWORTHY  
The Anzac Sonata  
143pp. Chatto and Windus. £4.95.  
0701130504

Jon Stallworthy's poems through the past twenty-five years resemble a procession which is colourful but maybe a little too stately. *The Anzac Sonata* contains poems from six of the seven books he has published since *The Anatomy of Love* (1961) — only *The Apple Barrel* is not represented — and a section of twenty new poems which gives the book its title. In this new section we do not find progress or change but consistency, a quality perhaps better suited to Stallworthy's world-view.

That there is little development is less disappointing than it might otherwise be since Stallworthy has been from the beginning an accomplished, subtle and musical poet. His strength lies too in the fact that he is serious and ardent about his limited preoccupations; and though they may be limited his themes are grand and noble. He has a feeling for the past that amounts to an old-fashioned *pietas*, and he is grateful to England and to his family forebears for making him what he is.

Back in the 1960s these feelings may have seemed to stem from a youthful romanticism which had discovered mortality. There was the strikingly elegiac "Poem Upon the Quin-

centenary of Magdalen College" — "The chapel and the candles weeping. / White boys erect, each with the sun / alive beneath his skin and gold blood leaping, / stooped in one hour . . .". There was a concern with the span of a life that inclined to morbidity. "Miss Lavender taught us to ride / clamping hulkers between saddle and knee / . . . that March the water-meadow froze / and Miss Lavender died, consumptive / on a stable floor . . .". The poem "No Ordinary Sunday" poignantly renders the schoolboy's terrified love for dead soldiers: "Ahead / of us, in strict step, as we idled home / marched the formations of the towering dead."

There was a vigorous, almost idiosyncratic defence of empire that may seem even more nostalgic now than it did then. "If you condemn / their violence in a violent age / speak of their courage." A *Familial Tree* (reprinted here in its entirety) gave shape to the urgent historicity that is Stallworthy's mainspring and that he expressed before in the poem "The Source" — "My fathers in search of fulfilment storm through / my body . . .". In this sequence portraying those Stallworthys of the last century, who brought the voice of the English God to "heathen fields well ploughed, / well planted and worth harvesting / as any in Preston Bissett", there is the lovely lyric ballad "Birds of the Parish", a poem which lends incidentally a radical twist to what may seem a totally conservative politics.

The section of new poems is dominated by his familiar themes: the valour of past generations, the history of an England that was always

certain, always striving, and, in the personal domain, the complementary theme of family fealty. The form is assured, the language characteristically vigorous. "Great Britain" is both epic and elegiac. "Off-guard, the ship, ripped by the claws / of Dundrum Bay, jarred by its jaws / breaks the teeth that transfix / her, throws coal to the sea . . .". As he celebrated the past so he now does the future, placing himself in a continuum of hope: "and drink a toast / to those converging, who will arrive / at this round table when we are dust, / will draw a chair up, draw a cork . . .". It is a major virtue of his poems that they are deeply affirmative; but this determined affirmation can also be a weakness. The attitude can be one-sided, the tendency to domesticate and to locate loss, pain and death in a higher harmony can have the effect of sentimentalism. The poem "The Anzac Sonata" itself, for instance, a lament for an Anzac soldier killed at Gallipoli, is somewhat cloying.

With his almost Victorian perspective, Stallworthy celebrates an era and an attitude that are already well-sung, bringing to our century of war and faded empire a clean, wholesome nineteenth-century conviction, and, not least, an idea of death as something which "kills but cannot vanquish". There may be a liberation in this anachronistic affirmativeness: Stallworthy's simplistic *pietas* towards the past frees him to elaborate his complex tapestries of language, but it accounts as well for the lack of tension in his poems, the too tractable emotion.

## Cheery guilt

Grevel Lindop

HERBERT LOMAS  
Letters in the Dark  
68pp. Oxford University Press. £4.95.  
0192819593

*Letters in the Dark* is an attempt at something ambitious and worthwhile: an extended religious meditation in fifty-two sections, loosely unified by references to Southwark Cathedral which Herbert Lomas attended for several years. Unfortunately, the tone of many sections is not so religious as churchy. The letter of the title is addressed to an "Invisible reader, impossible God" — in other words, to whatever audience Lomas can constitute in his playful, confessional and at times coyly self-regarding text. And while a certain lack of interest in distinguishing God from man may be defensible on theological grounds, in the poem a comes across as an unfortunate implication that we, and God, are members of an in-group where one chats about "Mervyn and Trevor" (Bishops Stockwood and Huddleston, is those not in the know) and rejoices in the doings of "our spastic lady" — regarded, judge by the possessive pronoun, as a sort of congregational mascot.

Lomas succumbs too often to sentimentality. His factitious guilt about his own status ("my clothes can stink of divinity") and about his failure to "admit the divinity in 'toothless tramps' and 'washed poor women'" shows a crude stereotyping as excruciating as the efforts of "Mervyn and Trevor" to create a "demythologizing" Christmas by producing "a houseless pair / out of the thousand" together with their baby and old things — an ass, and exhibiting them in Tiddler Square, an exploit chronicled without apparent irony in section XLIII.

Emotional self-indulgence is accompanied at times by corresponding verbal laxity. Pentecost generates some peculiarly unhelpful mixtures of metaphor: "The skeleton of the knocks / In the pipes is fossilised here inside us" are admonished, cryptically; and again "not enough to feel the ripple / Of the tidal thigh within our brain — / Who can see more?"

Fortunately Lomas can do better than this. Two long sections, about an operation for cancer and about his mother, seem painfully best and sharply observant. Both, in a way, concern privacy, the importance and insecurity conferred on the self when it comes under observation by others. In the first, the remembered disorientation of fear is conveyed through jarring glimpses of the excruciating honesty of other people:

A houseman came in first in a pure white coat. With high heels; and leaned against a wall. Hands folded behind his bum. His smoky eye. We were observant I knew to see how I would take it. The specialist bustled in, with a hand-wag. Assuringly: "It was cancer." No surprise.

The other section imagines a posthumous reunion with the poet's mother and discusses the extent to which the comfort, and the horror, of being fully understood by another person are identical. Here and there in other parts of *Letters in the Dark* are passages of understated description which, applied to commonplace materials, produce a teasing symbolic resonance, as when Lomas suddenly draws a self-portrait in terms of his suburban frontage: "I stare out of a bay window / At a chirping garden, a holly tree, conker spikes. / A knowledge of late roses. They could imply / A mask of sorts: the passivity of this show." Can blink like a face — everything in it is eyes.

There is also evidence of a real talent for light verse, in a splendid section about an eighteenth-century patent medicine manufacturer, buried in Southwark Cathedral, and a somewhat squib about a "mystical lama" and a "humane filling the prams / full with the consequences / of its indiscretions". But memorably apposite phrases are outnumbered by the vacuous.

The verses are amorphous; sentences already obfuscating are rendered more difficult by apparently random chopping into odd-lengthed components and, sometimes, an unconstructive absence of punctuation. The book is nicely, and probably expensively, produced by Poetry Wales Press with the financial support of the Welsh Arts Council — a measure of parochial wealth and provincialism.

## Effective digressions

Patricia Craig

PADRAIC COLUM  
The King of Ireland's Son: An Irish folk tale  
25pp. Floris Classics. Paperback, £5.95.  
06351512X

Padraic Colum, who was born in 1881, spent a part of his childhood in his grandmother's house in Co. Cavan, where he heard a good many traditional tales; not only his grandmother, but the neighbourhood seannachie, or storyteller, used to regale him with the exploits of legendary Celtic figures. It was not an Irish-speaking district, he says, but "at that time it was as close to the old life as any English-speaking locality could be". The enthralled young listener took it all in: the fantastic elements, the colourful motifs, the intricacies of the narratives. When he came to retell the stories for publication he bore in mind, as well, the method of oral delivery perfected by the seannachies — the stick in the hand raised at moments of climax, "the runs or repetitions and rhythmicity".

*The King of Ireland's Son* (first published in 1916) is one such retelling. It consists of a number of interlocking adventures, with a few incidental episodes added for good measure. The king's son first journeys to the domain of the Enchanter of the Black Back-Lands where, after performing various ritual feats (with a little supernatural help), he wins Fedelma, the Enchanter's youngest daughter. Having won her, he proceeds to lose her; she is abducted from night under his nose when he insists on going to sleep in a dicey spot. Foolhardy behaviour and its consequences loom large in this type of folk-tale. Misfortune, though, is never inevitable; if certain things are done in a cer-

tain way, an illogical but wholly satisfactory outcome may be obtained.

The heroes of folk-tales are for ever setting off in pursuit of some significant object — a Crystal Egg, a couple of magic rowanberries, a Sword of Light. The King's son is very diligent in his search for the missing Fedelma, acquiring perfect strangers to ask the way to the Land of Mist (where she is being held in an enchanted sleep), only interrupting his sorties in various directions to listen to a story about the King of the Cats, which his father's steward insists on telling him, and finally getting on the right



Mr Joker, the cracked china clown from L. Frank Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*. One of thirty-two wood engravings by Barry Moser for the recently published Pennyroyal Press edition (268pp. University of California Press. £16.95 until March 31, 1987, then £21.25. 0520058224).

## Man as animal

Maureen McCulloch

ANTHONY MASTERS  
Badger  
141pp. Methuen. £6.95.  
041663802

That the world can be a cruel place and people often barbaric is a fact the growing child must sooner or later face. A harder lesson is that even the people one loves are capable of cruelty — to each other and to animals.

The plot of *Badger* centres on the bloody (and now illegal) practice of badger-baiting. George Lammas and his son Billy share the hobby of digging for badgers and setting them, specially trained terriers. George's daughter Jenny is fiercely against the practice, to the point of reporting her family to the police. Her mother is gradually sinking into a

despairing alcoholism. The Lammases' cousin Andrew, a thirteen-year-old "townie", who comes to stay while his mother is convalescing, sympathizes with Jenny but wants to be friends with Billy.

It would have been easy enough to write the rather trite story of a sensitive town-dweller coming up against the cruelty of his country cousins. Anthony Masters instead treats the problem with some subtlety, creating characters who can be both kind and vicious. He pulls no punches in dealing with the badger-baiting, describing in savage detail two fights between terriers and badgers, one of which results in the deaths of both combatants. His treatment is never sensational but he does acknowledge the sick excitement felt by the observers of such spectacles and he successfully explores the reasons for his characters' behaviour. George Lammas appears at first to be a brutal husband and a tyrannical father, but his behaviour, we learn, stems from his fear of losing Jenny, the child he accepted as his own and

track through the good offices of an eagle. To compound the original error of falling asleep in the wrong place, he acts wrongly on one or two further occasions, and thereby gets sidetracked into a number of rectifying quests. At one point his proceedings overlap with those of another folk-hero, Gilly of the Goatskin, or Flann, as he comes to be called (the two young men find themselves in adjacent quarries counting ox-horns for the Old Woman of Beare); and eventually it is with the doings of Flann that the main narrative is concerned.

Flann, whose task is to outwit a giant, not to mention twenty-four yellow cats, has been brought up by three Hags and kept for twelve years in a cradle, and he can claim seven swan-ances among his odder relatives. Like the King's son, Flann, for all his good heart, has only to be warned not to do something to find himself doing it; his transgression at a crucial point is to kiss a designing young woman in the absence of his true-love Moring, and afterwards he finds all trace of Moring wiped out of his consciousness. A few plays have to be undertaken to set this matter right.

T. W. Rolleston, in his *Myths and Legends of the Celtic Race*, distinguishes between mythology and folklore by suggesting that the latter represents degraded mythology, or else mythology in the making. Its tone is typically less elevated and its details homelier, and when the cast includes some mighty allegorical figure, like Finn or Cuchulainn, it is usually in a more accessible embodiment. *The King of Ireland's Son*, for instance, has the Goban Saor, the Danaan blacksmith with his symbolic forge and anvil, who is referred to simply as a sturdy, middle-aged man. Padraic Colum had learned his trade well from the seannachies of Co. Cavan, with their instinct for effective digression and placing of emphasis; and his extended folk-tale is suitably picturesque and inventive.

George's mistrust of the "Gypo" Brock, is seen to be justified when Brock, an initially attractive character, allows the badgers to suffer in order not to be caught by the police and encourages Jenny to steal from George before leaving her — as he left her mother fifteen years earlier — with promises that he will send for her. The reader knows that Jenny understands that she is being abandoned again, even as she tells George of Brock's promises.

Anthony Masters deals with powerful and complex emotions in understated, plain prose. The final reconciliation of George and Jenny beside the sett, where Jenny has brought an injured badger to die, is moving mainly because it is brief and simple. Masters leaves the reader to draw a parallel between the badger's physical wounds and George's emotional suffering.

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